

taken in others of the Cotton States. Throughout the South three distinct parties contended on the secession question. One party advocated immediate secession of each State without waiting for any other. The second party advocated cooperation among the States, to the end that if one seceded all might secede together. The third party opposed secession altogether. For the time being, the immediate Secessionists had their way in the Cotton States, while in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and other States the Cooperationists and Union men were in the ascendant. The South Carolina Convention passed its ordinance of secession on December 20, and at the same time invited the other Southern States to meet in Convention at Montgomery, Alabama, early next year.

As it became clear that the South was in terrible earnest, a strong feeling for compromise developed in the North and in the border States. Abraham Lincoln, while conceding nothing to the theory or policy of secession, took occasion, in a letter to Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, to make it plain that he had no purpose to interfere with slavery in any State where it already existed.

December 3 Congress convened at Washington. President Buchanan, in his last annual message, denied the right of a State to secede, but could not find that the Constitution gave Congress any power to "coerce into submission a State which is attempting to withdraw or has actually withdrawn" from the Union. "The fact is," he said, "that our Union rests upon public opinion, and can never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war." Attorney-General Black sustained the President in this view. A committee appointed by the House declared that "any reasonable, proper, and constitutional remedies and effectual guaranties of their political rights and interests should be promptly and cheerfully given" to the dissatisfied States. A Senate committee,