FRANCIS W. DAWSON AND DANIEL H. CHAMBERLAIN:
A POLITICAL FLIRTATION, 1874-1876

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Thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
in partial fulfillment for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
HISTORY

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June, 1968
Blacksburg, Virginia
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A highly significant shift in the relationship between Francis Warrington Dawson and Daniel H. Chamberlain, Republican reform governor, developed in the waning days of Reconstruction in South Carolina. Dawson was the energetic editor of the Charleston News and Courier, the state's most influential newspaper of the period. The two powerful men, beginning as enemies and of antagonistic political parties, ultimately began to work together for what they believed to be the welfare of the state. This study is an attempt to define the relationship of the two men and to examine its impact on contemporary state politics.

Despite the legends which have flourished locally, an extremely vocal and resourceful group opposed almost to the last an all out attempt to elect a Democratic governor of South Carolina, which arose in 1876. The opposition faction, while certainly loyal to its party, had maintained that such a "Straightout" Democratic effort was both politically inexpedient and unnecessary since Governor Chamberlain had proven his trustworthiness and his determination to enact needed reforms. This position, which may be labeled "fusionist," was best articulated by Dawson, although he was an outspoken critic of the "carpetbagging" Chamberlain until late 1874. Similar attempts at fusion, also championed by Dawson, had failed in the elections of 1870 and 1874, and once more fusionism was to be overcome by forces stronger than his unstinting editorial pen.\footnote{For a revealing summary of fusion efforts in South Carolina, see Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [1965]), pp. 354-355.} Its very existence is indicative of the complexity of
Reconstruction politics in South Carolina.

A remarkable transformation took place in the dynamic editor's personal evaluation of Chamberlain. From total opposition prior to the 1874 gubernatorial election, Dawson quickly swung to wholehearted support of the man who was to be the last Republican governor of South Carolina. The deeply rooted reasons for the change lie more in the character of the editor and in the aspirations and aims which he held for his adopted state than in any corrupt bargaining. The Dawson-Chamberlain relationship was a political flirtation between two men on opposite sides of the party fence, not a sell-out, as many contemporary detractors believed.

A "perfect steam engine" of energy, Frank Dawson was essentially a pragmatist who believed that the future growth of South Carolina and particularly of Charleston, his primary interest, depended upon a return to honest government and low taxation. Only then would outside capital flow to the state and to the city. Thus he could support, as he urged his readers to do, the "best" candidates for state office no matter what their party affiliation. Vowing always to work for the benefit of

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2 R. Means Davis, "The Campaign of 1876" (unpublished manuscript), R. Means Davis Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

3 Editorial, The Charleston (South Carolina) News, March 24, 1873, p. 2; also see editorial, The News and Courier (Charleston, S. C.), September 1, 1874, p. 2.

4 Editorial, News and Courier, April 18, 1873, p. 2.
Charleston, Dawson once wrote:

Abstract politics are not to our taste; they interest us only as far as they affect trade and concern the peace and security of the people. It is our desire and practice to deal candidly with Conservative and Radical alike. Those who labor for the good of the State, The News will support; those who, whatever their motive, disregard her welfare, The News will unalteringly condemn.5

One of Dawson's consuming interests in life was to see the economic revitalization of South Carolina. His close association with many of the leaders of the powerful Charleston business community,6 as well as his numerous statements regarding business activities,7 demonstrate his faithful representation of the business outlook of the Gilded Age, Southern branch. A contemporary commented privately, "I think he had his ambitions and looked out for self," but this ambitious man was without doubt "morally the equal of the rest of the politicians of the State."8

Unquestionably, Dawson saw the wrestling of power from the hands of those Radical Republican leaders who he believed had plundered the state

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5 Editorial, News, January 1, 1873, p. 2. Dawson and his partner bought out the Charleston Courier in April, 1873, and the paper was henceforth called The News and Courier. For the sake of clarity, the journal will always be cited under its later name in this paper.

6 For example, see News and Courier, October 6, 1874, p. 1; Alfred B. Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts: South Carolina's Deliverance in 1876 (Charleston: Walker, Evans and Cogswell Company, [1935]), pp. 341, 443; Williamson, After Slavery, p. 401.

7 For example see editorials, News and Courier, March 27, 1873; February 10, 1874; March 10, 1874; and April 17, 1874.

8 Davis, "Campaign of 1876."
as the necessary step toward reducing taxation. "Loosen the iron
fingers," he demanded, and allow the hands of "intelligence and property"
to regain control. With new confidence infused into the minds of both
local and foreign businessmen, the state would then witness an upsurge
of industry and an expansion of agriculture that would demonstrate the
wisdom of supporting a policy of cooperation with whoever would right
the "evils of the political and social situation." 9

On some occasions, the irrespressible editor came near the brink
of heresy in his search for a rapprochement with Republican strength.
In an editorial he entitled "State Rights," he contended that the "masses"
of South Carolina citizens would not be "overscrupulous" in judging
methods if only President Grant or the Congress "proposed to secure to
South Carolina a truly representative, honest, and efficient State
government..." 10 Almost a year later, he went even further when he de-
clared that South Carolinians would "waive all abstract considerations
of State Rights. They only hope that, as Congress saw fit to impose the
present mockery of a State Government upon them, it will now find a way
to sweep that Government out of existence." 11

If Dawson could adopt such a practical outlook toward the national
Republican leaders, he was even more conciliatory toward the state
leaders. It is possible that he was merely practicing the art of using

9 Editorial, News and Courier, April 11, 1873, p. 2.
10 Editorial, News and Courier, April 23, 1873, p. 2.
the "carrot and stick," for he alternately praised and condemned Radical officials in South Carolina in the days and months leading up to Chamberlain's election in 1874. He was practical and flexible and thus became the target of suspicions that Charleston's most vocal citizen was on the Radical payroll. Dawson obviously agreed with his friend, William L. Trenholm, who in 1872 pointed out that the Conservatives were in the minority. If challenged by Conservative nominees, the Republicans inevitably retaliated on partisan grounds. Since the Conservative minority had found that they could not hope to secure many Negro votes, Trenholm believed that the wisest course would be to throw their weight toward the election of honest Republican candidates.

Dawson, despite his efforts to remind Radical office-holders that his paper never ceased its vigilance, often adopted an optimistic tone for he was, by nature, a hopeful man. Nevertheless, he was careful to temper this optimism. He declared that many "who delightedly believe that no good can come out of a Radical Legislature, laugh heartily"


15 For example, see editorials, News and Courier, March 4, 1873; April 22, 1873, p. 2.
whenever one who has not (though sorely tempted) lost his faith in Republican human nature, ventures to assert that measures of public benefit will pass without pay, and that some shadow of the reform spirit lingers in the breast of the members."\(^{16}\)

The restless editor truly believed in his self-appointed mission, the restoration of good government in South Carolina by whatever means possible. The task was not an easy one, and the crusader occasionally felt discouraged. With a touch of pomposity, he wrote to his wife: "I am tempted to abandon the fight, which harrases me, tires me, interferes with my business and costs me time and money; but if I do, who will try as I have tried?"\(^ {17}\)

Therefore, Dawson on many occasions produced words of outright praise for some Republicans. Faithful to his promise of support for all honest men, he wrote of a soon to be removed Charleston postmaster: "The South needs men like him in public positions, whatever may be their political creed."\(^ {18}\) Indeed, Dawson instigated a petition to President Grant requesting the official's continuance in office. He insisted that the President should know that "Charleston can appreciate a gentleman whose integrity is no less staunch than his Republicanism is sincere."\(^ {19}\)

\(^{16}\) Editorial, News and Courier, January 29, 1873, p. 2.

\(^{17}\) Letter, F. W. Dawson to Sarah Morgan Dawson, September 4, 1874, F. W. Dawson I, Papers, Duke University Library, Manuscript Division.

\(^{18}\) Editorial, News and Courier, March 4, 1873, p. 2.

\(^{19}\) Editorial, News and Courier, March 6, 1873, p. 2.
Dawson's use of the editorial carrot, however, was not nearly so striking as his recourse to the stick in the period prior to Chamberlain's election. Increasingly critical of the administration of Governor Franklin Moses as it became evident that his campaign pledges for reform would not be fulfilled, Dawson mounted a bitter attack in the summer of 1873. He wrote that it seemed as if the Republicans had simply "exchanged the devil for a witch, or vice versa" when they chose Moses over former Governor Scott in 1872. As the months went by, Dawson leveled specific charges at Governor Moses, accusing him of being addicted to "Fast horses, diamonds, and other extravagances," and claiming that Moses had demanded $40,000 to approve payments to the "Credit Mobilier Republican Printing Company...." Additionally, Dawson maintained that Moses, despite the lack of a private fortune and with an annual salary of only $3500, had purchased the Preston Mansion in Columbia whose refurbishing had cost "somebody" $100,000.20

In a series of editorials in November, 1873, the editor even more enthusiastically turned his guns on the Moses regime. Blaming "something in the air of Columbia" that brings out "every manner of rascality," Dawson insisted, "Put a politician in a State office to-day and next week he will have at least a gold watch and chain and a fast horse."21

The faint sounds of the opening cannons for the 1874 campaign were definitely audible as Dawson listed the sins of the Moses Administration

20 Editorials, News and Courier, July 24, 1873; November 24, 1873, p. 2.
21 Editorial, News and Courier, November 26, 1873, p. 2.
in the same editorial. The Republicans had "utterly destroyed" the
state's credit and increased the state taxation rate without paying the
state's legitimate creditors. "The Governor is threatened with impeach-
ment; the Supreme Court is accused of selling its decisions; the whole
fabric of the government is rotten and corrupt." However, Dawson, ever
the optimist, argued that a new day was dawning, although it was "weary
waiting. But the time is coming when we may work actively and intelli-
gently for deliverance." As a molder of public opinion, Dawson was
sensitive to its importance and rejoiced that "decent people the whole
country through" were turning their backs on Franklin Moses.

By February, 1874, Dawson's editorials were lashing the Moses
Administration even more severely as he published figures comparing
state expenditures since 1869. Day after day the editor harped on the
matter of state finances and the urgent necessity for organization
among the propertied, taxpaying classes in order to stop this "process
of confiscation" which "if continued, must of necessity end in the
utter impoverishment and ruin of the state."24

But even when wrought up to such a fever pitch, Dawson was too
shrewd to accept the mantle of the partisan politico. He asserted, "Ours
is no political fight." Rather: "It is the struggle of an impoverished

22 Ibid.
23 Editorials, News and Courier, February 5, 1874; February 7,
1874; February 17, 1874; February 18, 1874; February 27, 1874; February
28, 1874, p. 2.
24 Editorial, News and Courier, January 9, 1874, p. 2. Also see
editorials, February 11, 1874; February 21, 1874; February 26, 1874.
and almost despairing people against a band of merciless robbers; of intelligence against ignorance; of civilization against barbarism."

Certainly, the pragmatic editor had one attentive ear turned northward when he made such statements. Only a week later, he claimed that Northern sympathizers both in and out of power were encouraged to help the Carolinians by the "knowledge and belief" that the struggle being initiated in South Carolina was directed "against no party and against no race...." Dawson assured his readers of his determination to make the fight on that line because it was "the only one which could be followed with safety and advantage." By April, 1874, there was some reason to believe that the anti-Moses campaign, predicated along Dawson's line of thinking, was bearing fruit. "I am afraid," wrote a Washington correspondent sarcastically, "that 'Our native young Governor' must make up his mind that, instead of being the Moses, he is going to be the Jonah of 'The Party' in South Carolina."26

In his eagerness to see a return to power of men whom he believed responsible, Dawson consistently opposed a platform built to "lily-white" specifications. Any attempt to secure an all-white government was both "politically inexpedient and what is more important, intrinsically wrong," he insisted.27 A political realist, Dawson studied the census figures and understood that a Negro majority of 30,000 could not be convinced in

26 News and Courier, April 1, 1874, p. 1.
any significant number to vote a straight Democratic ticket. Accordingly, he declared: "Any policy which contemplates the arraying of whites against blacks, at the polls, must fail, and will deserve to fail.... It may be assumed that any policy will lose which does not provide for attracting a considerable colored vote."  

Publicly, then, Dawson accepted Negro political equality and used his editorial columns to urge a "binding together of all honest men, without respect to color or party" to restore good government to the state. Accusing the Radicals of seeking always to "sow discord and dissension between the races," Dawson championed the cause of racial cooperation.  

Indeed, cooperation was the key to understanding the basic political philosophy of Frank Dawson. Moved by both idealism and realism, he was more concerned with pragmatic ends rather than doctrinaire means. His flexibility and his realistic optimism were the main ingredients in the policy which he devised for South Carolina's adjustment to the stresses of the time. His impact was enormous. Even those who disagreed with him called him "one of the strongest, most convincing writers this country has ever known" and attributed "dominating influence" throughout

28 Davis, "Campaign of 1876."
29 Editorial, News and Courier, April 16, 1873, p. 2.
30 For example, see editorials, News and Courier, June 19, 1873; November 18, 1873; March 8, 1873, p. 2.
31 Editorial, News and Courier, September 25, 1873, p. 2. Literally dozens of editorials, 1874-1876, advocated racial cooperation as well as those cited here.
the state to his News and Courier. 32

In the year 1874, Dawson's potent pen was directed against the election of Radical Republican Daniel H. Chamberlain as Governor of South Carolina. As rumors of political maneuvering in Columbia for the Republican gubernatorial nomination mounted in the summer, Dawson's antipathy toward Chamberlain, one of the leading candidates, grew more pronounced. He distrusted Chamberlain and claimed in June that his election would "put the last nail in the coffin of Reform." Between the contenders--Governor Moses, former Governor Scott, and Chamberlain who had served as Attorney General under Scott--Dawson could see no choice for the Conservatives since "all three have been mixed up and associated with the thieving of the past six years." Yet, in a significant concession, he wrote that the nomination of other Republicans would be "perfectly acceptable." He even despaired that so much attention was being paid by the Northern press to the corruption of the Moses Administration, since the general condemnation of Moses might cause other culprits to be overlooked and "pave the way for the election of some person who is equally or more objectionable," an obvious reference to Chamberlain. 33

Meantime, Chamberlain wrote to Dawson humorously noting that his letter was "Not for publication" and informing the editor that he had not received his copy of the Charleston paper for two weeks. "I knew I

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33 Editorials, News and Courier, June 16, 1874; June 23, 1874; June 15, 1874, p. 2.
was not in favor with the editors of The News and Courier, but I did not imagine you would go to the extent of refusing to sell me your paper," he lightly wrote. Like an operation, he declared, the paper was "painful but necessary for him," and "I wish I could add, healthful!" 34

No doubt, the reference to his lack of favor in Dawson's eyes stems from such squibs on the editorial pages in July as the one which called Moses "less dangerous than the wily ex-Attorney-General" and that one which pledged no direct or indirect support for Moses or Chamberlain from the Conservatives. 35

By August, 1874, Dawson's plan of campaign against Chamberlain was mapped out, and he wrote to his vacationing wife on August 2: "Tomorrow I open on Chamberlain," because his chances of securing the nomination were greater than those of Moses. He added: "It will be hard work, but I think I can prove he is a whitened sepulchre. His strength is that the carpetbag crowd support him." The only difference between Moses and Chamberlain, Dawson told his wife, was the difference between "a foot-pad and a forger." 36

True to his word, on August 3 Dawson began a series of editorials designed to head off Chamberlain's nomination. He charged that Chamberlain, the front-runner and the presumed choice of President Grant, was except for "personal licentiousness," equally as bad a candidate as Moses. Because people in Washington as well as in South

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35 Editorials, News and Courier, July 20, 1874; July 30, 1874, p. 2.

36 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, August 2, 1874, Dawson Papers
Carolina believed him "fit" to lead a Reform movement, Dawson argued that it was doubly necessary to expose Chamberlain's wrongdoing. 37

The editor, who found his head "dazed" after "groping" for illumination in "this Chamberlain crusade," 36 leveled four charges at the candidate which dated primarily from the period in which he had served as Attorney-General. First, Dawson insisted that Chamberlain with two others who formed a majority on the Advisory Board to the Land Commission held the responsibility for that Commission's purchase of land for $800,000 to benefit the freedmen, land worth less than one-fourth the purchase price. This Board had been chastised by a Joint Investigating Committee of the State Legislature for serving its own financial interests. Secondly, Dawson claimed that Chamberlain, former Governor Scott, and F. L. Cardozo were guilty of the "misapplication" of the returns from the sale of Agricultural Land Script authorized by the Congress. Next, according to Dawson, Chamberlain along with Scott and others shared the responsibility for the sale of the state's stock in the Greenville and Columbia Railroad at less than par value as well as the sale of the controlling interest in the Blue Ridge Railroad for one dollar per share. The editor strongly implied that Chamberlain had financially benefitted from the stock sales. Of all Dawson's charges against Chamberlain, the Blue Ridge matter was never completely resolved. The Governor denied it always, whether convincingly or not. Finally,

37 Editorials, News and Courier, August 3, 1874; August 4, 1874, p. 2.

38 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, August 5, 1874, Dawson Papers.
Chamberlain, insisted Dawson, was responsible as a member of the State Financial Board for the losses caused the state by the impetuous state financial agent, H. H. Kimpton, since that body had appointed him.

Ending his two column denunciation with a promise to print additional facts to prove each charge, Dawson again proclaimed the danger which Chamberlain presented, for "while he has not the vulgar audacity of Moses, he is more culpable as well as more adroit than that proligate debauchee, and is even less worthy than he is to fill the executive chair." 39

For four successive days Dawson filled his editorial columns with the promised "facts" as he called them. Asserting that it was a "mockery, a grim jest," to speak of Chamberlain as a candidate for "any other place than a cell in the State Penitentiary," the editor fired blast after blast. The "subtle schemer" with his "devilish hypocrisy" and "systematic corruption" seemed to Dawson to represent the final triumph of the Evil One. 40

Certainly, he made every journalistic effort to prevent Chamberlain's nomination. Few editions of The News and Courier appeared in August and September which did not contain a condemnation of some kind or another.

In addition to the specific charges laid out in the August 4-10 series, Dawson assured his readers that Chamberlain could indeed lay claim to being "unprejudiced" by virtue of being born outside the state.

40 Editorials, News and Courier, August 6, 1874; August 7, 1874; August 10, 1874, p. 2.
No one, gleefully asserted the editor, could doubt that he was "entirely free from the old fashioned prejudices in favor of Honor, and Fairdealing, and Candor" which most South Carolinians, local or foreign-born, held. Surely this was an ironic charge from the English-born Dawson.

In the middle of August, Chamberlain published a statement categorically denying Dawson's charges, but The News and Courier headlined above the statement "An Elaborate But Unsatisfactory Answer To The Charges of Criminal Neglect of Duty," and its editor interspersed running objections to the candidate's explanations. On the editorial page, Dawson fully exploited the opportunity which Chamberlain's denial presented, by pointing out that at best Chamberlain was either duped by his close associates and was hence rather stupid, or that he knew their duplicity but refused to share in the plunder while keeping quiet about the corruption he witnessed. Thus, Chamberlain, in Dawson's view, was "Convicted Out Of His Own Mouth" of the gravest neglect of his public duty.

Not infrequently during these hot, pre-convention days, Dawson inserted anti-Chamberlain attacks from other journals, both Northern and Southern, into the pages of The News and Courier. On the very eve of the Republican nominating convention, Dawson summed up his opposition to

41 Editorial, News and Courier, August 13, 1874, p. 2.
42 Report and Editorial, News and Courier, August 20, 1874, pp. 1, 2.
43 Editorial Headline, News and Courier, August 21, 1874, p. 2.
44 For example, see News and Courier, August 28, 1874; September 4, 1874.
Chamberlain: "Either he stole or he allowed others to steal; either he saw others steal and said nothing, or he was the only man in the State who did not see that stealing." Dawson repeated his oft-given pledge that if the Republicans would offer a better candidate than Chamberlain, the Conservatives would not oppose that candidate but would concentrate on electing Conservative members of the legislature, an ironic foreshadowing of the editor's 1876 position. But, he warned somewhat cryptically, if Chamberlain were the Republican choice, an appeal would be made to the people.

Earlier in the summer Dawson had threatened a strong effort by Conservatives to elect their own slate, both state and local officials, unless an acceptable Republican candidate were nominated. In September, however, the editor stressed a promise to support Republican dissidents who were reportedly ready to bolt their party if Chamberlain were selected. He asserted that in that event it would be both the "duty and interest" of the Conservatives to stand behind the bolters. Only, if there were no Republican bolt, Dawson believed, should the Conservatives make their own nomination for governor in order to prove to the country the simple sincerity of their desire to evict corruption. He had offered the same argument in urging that no Conservative policy

45 Editorials, News and Courier, July 14, 1874; July 24, 1874; July 29, 1874, p. 2.

46 Editorial, News and Courier, September 7, 1874, p. 2

47 Editorials, News and Courier July 29, 1874; September 9, 1874, p. 2.
decision be taken until after the Republicans had met. 48 The editor, true to his nature, never forgot the importance of public opinion.

Dawson's efforts to block Chamberlain's nomination were not confined, however, to the printed page. He was privately immersed in an attempt to secure the endorsement of President Grant for General Joseph B. Kershaw, former Confederate leader and prominent Conservative. Kershaw and Dawson agreed on the necessity for a non-partisan, bi-racial approach to reform, both for moral and political reasons. 49

Writing to his wife on August 25, Dawson explained that the "general idea" behind this quiet conspiracy was to make Kershaw "Our Candidate" although he would probably be defeated "if the Radicals hold together." Nonetheless, the editor was determined to "keep on fighting till we win." 50

Evidently seeking to reach Grant's ears in an editorial published on the same day, Dawson described the President as opposed to Moses and Chamberlain and anyone else "who is a thief or the accomplice of thieves." He asserted that the President was incapable of using Federal troops to "browbeat" the white people of the state. 51

Two days later the exultant editor wrote to Sarah, serene at White Sulphur Springs, that his "great excitement" was due to a telegram from


49 For example, see News and Courier, July 18, 1874; August 13, 1874; August 28, 1874; August 29, 1874.

50 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, August 25, 1874, Dawson Papers.

"my friend," probably General James Connor, then in Washington, who conditionally pledged Grant's support of Kershaw's candidacy. The President, caught up in the third term controversy and Administration scandals, doubtless was seeking some support himself. Dawson expected further details by letter and was "on thorns to know how much or little it means."52 On August 29 Dawson exuded even more hope as he related to Sarah that his Washington "friend" had written that the President as well as the principal members of the Cabinet obviously approved the editor's proposals. "It may come to nothing," Dawson wrote, "but the situation has never been so promising as it is now." Unfortunately, the details of Dawson's "programme" are not pursued in this correspondence.53

Despite some further dealings with Grant by the Conservative emissary, General James Connor,54 the endorsement of Kershaw did not appear. Press speculation concerning the rumored Grant-Kershaw conference disconcerted the Radicals. The infamous "Honest John" Patterson, then serving in the United States Senate from South Carolina, reportedly was convincing Grant that Conservatives in the State were preparing for violence to insure a return to power.55 Distraught, Dawson reported to his wife: "Dear! My politics go wrong. Grant seems to have forsaken us." Blaming a lack of unity among the Conservatives as well as

52 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, August 27, 1874, Dawson Papers.
53 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, August 29, 1874, Dawson Papers.
54 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, September 1, 1874, Dawson Papers.
55 Editorial, News and Courier, September 1, 1874, p. 2. See also p. 1 of the same issue for news reports.
"a word from lying Patterson" concerning outrages then supposedly occurring in South Carolina for the failure of his scheme, Dawson was tempted to give up his efforts. 56

His disappointment is obvious in his editorial published the next day in which he fervently denies any "atrocities" in the state. Claiming that the only disturbances were those incited by "blood-thirsty" speeches by the Radicals, Dawson declared that Grant's directive regarding the possible use of troops to quell outbreaks of violence gave a sense of security to the Radicals. It assured them of their ability to nominate "Knaves or Confidence men" for state office so long as "by shouting that the Ku Klux are coming, they can drown the cry of Stop Thief." 57

Within four days of his discouraged letter to his wife, the irrepressible editor was replenished. Despite final confirmation from General Connor that a Kershaw endorsement would not be issued by Grant, the journalist wrote that he still believed in the rightness of his cooperative attempt, a course he called "right in itself...apart from the gain or loss by taking..." Furthermore, Grant's refusal would not swerve him "from persevering to the last in advocating Peace, Justice, Good-will." 58

Interestingly, on this same day Dawson published his own endorsement of General Kershaw for a Congressional seat. 59

56 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, September 4, 1874, Dawson Papers.
57 Editorial, News and Courier, September 5, 1874, p. 2.
58 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, September 6, 1874, Dawson Papers.
59 Editorial, News and Courier, September 8, 1874, p. 2.
The editor journeyed to Columbia on September 9 to report personally on the Republican nominating convention as well as the meeting of the State Tax Union, a group of Conservatives presided over by former Confederate General James Chestnut. That he also had a more nefarious mission was evidenced by the allusion in a letter to his wife of his concern for the "completion or the failure of my bargain to beat Chamberlain...I am anxious, tired, and suspicious of everything." He promised to give her the "history of the whole affair" in a later letter but it, unfortunately, has not survived. 60

The Republicans nominated Chamberlain on September 13. Dawson returned to Charleston, from which he wrote privately: "They beat me out by using more money than I had. Chamberlain was nominated and I had those anxious days and nights for nothing." He predicted that the Conservatives would now make a nomination and "be defeated" despite his earlier editorial optimism about the chances of a Conservative nominee. 61

Publicly, he accused Chamberlain of paying $500 per vote and of having as supporters all of the Republican malefactors while there was not "one criminal of note" among those who voted against him. Listing eighteen of those delegates who supported Chamberlain's nomination, Dawson had something wickedly slashing to say directly about each, save for F. L. Cardozo who, Dawson implied, was merely a liar. Now, the editor claimed, 62

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61 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, September 13, 1874, Dawson Papers. For optimistic evaluation of Conservative prospects, see editorial, News and Courier, September 9, 1874, p. 2.
it was clear that Chamberlain was "completely surrounded by the Ring, of which he is now the centre, and from which he cannot, if he would, escape." Consequently, Dawson pledged his support to Judge John T. Green if, as was rumored, a delayed Republican bolt took place and Green was nominated by such a body. 62

Thereupon, Dawson threw himself enthusiastically into what was to be called the Independent Republican camp. Fearing that "disorder and turbulence" would set the South back a decade or more and would make "breadwinning more and more difficult, drive capital away, and postpone indefinitely the promised era of good feelings," 63 the editor strenuously urged "Honest Republicans" to put up Green as a challenger to Chamberlain. 64 Day after day he boomed Green's candidacy, announcing that while not entirely satisfied by that jurist, he was nevertheless the "best man" the Conservatives could elect and the "only man" who could defeat the Chamberlain "Ring." 65 Giving his reasons for support of the Independent Republican movement, the realistic editor pointed out that the Conservatives, as Dawson termed the Democrats during this cooperationist era, faced a numerical majority of Republicans. They were "thoroughly organized" and "utterly unscrupulous" and were also, he added bitterly, "sustained by the countenance and support of the

62 Editorials, News and Courier, September 14, 1874; September 15, 1874, p. 2.
63 Editorial, News and Courier, September 16, 1874, p. 2.
64 Editorial, News and Courier, September 17, 1874, p. 2.
65 Editorial, News and Courier, September 21, 1874, p. 2.
Government at Washington." The Negroes would always support the Republic-
cans in any strictly party battle. Thus, the wisest course was not to
offer a Conservative candidate but to support the Independent Republican
movement since it had the only practical chance of defeating Chamberlain
and his "varnished scoundrelism." 66

Two days later Dawson's sensitivity to public opinion again emerged
when he argued that the Conservatives had what amounted to a "compact"
to support a good, honest Republican candidate because this was for what
they had cried so long. By failing to sustain the bolters, the Con-
servatives would have proved to the nation that "with us the desire for
reform is subordinate to party feeling, and that in the temper of over-
grown children, because we could not have our tea served out to us in
our own particular cup and saucer, we went hungry and supperless to
bed." 67

The headline "DayBreak, At Last" appeared above the report of Judge
Green's nomination by Republican dissidents on October 5. The Inde-
pendent Republicans had likewise endorsed General Kershaw for the Fourth
District Congressional Seat. Cooperation made sense, Dawson argued on
the editorial page, since Kershaw could do far more good in Congress than
he could as Governor with a hostile legislature. 68 Four days later the
Executive Committee gave its seal of approval to the Green ticket even

66 Editorial, News and Courier, September 26, 1874, p. 2.
68 News and Courier, October 5, 1874, pp. 1, 2.
though a Negro, Martin Delany, was Green's running mate. 69

Throughout the weeks preceding the November election, Dawson continually printed reports predicting Green's victory while condemning the "oily-tongued demagogue," Chamberlain. Charging that the regular nominee had a backbone made of "gristle" and that he would not be strong enough to enact reform against the wishes of his comrades, even if he desired it, Dawson pleaded with the voters to support the Independent Republicans even if it was simply a matter of choosing the least obnoxious candidate. "Would a starving man refuse bread because it was not made to his liking?" he asked. 70 A more pressing reason for this support was offered on October 30 when the Conservative Executive Committee for Charleston County, a group composed of Dawson, General Connor, and some of the leading men in the Charleston business community, published an appeal to the voters in behalf of cooperation. They pointed out that the names of Conservatives, selected by Conservatives, appeared on the Independent Republican ballot as candidates for county and state offices. 71

Additionally, a series of editorials were published in which Dawson argued that each citizen of the state would benefit from an increase of capital invested in South Carolina since without expansion, profits could not rise. Therefore, salaries and employment were unable to climb.

69 News and Courier, October 9, 1874, p. 1.
70 Editorials, News and Courier, October 19, 1874; October 29, 1874, p. 2.
71 News and Courier, October 30, 1874, p. 1.
Ignoring the depression which began in 1873, he cited "the excessive taxation and the disruptive character of the State Government" as well as discontent and rumors of racial strife as the reasons for the unavailability of capital. Thus, South Carolinians were caught in an endless circle, Dawson declared. "The owner of property cannot use or sell what he has to any advantage, and the laborer receives small wages, always, and sometimes cannot find work at all." The only way to halt this circle was to defeat Chamberlain, thereby restoring confidence.

With Green's election, Dawson argued, South Carolina could become "the Southern Land of Gold." With American and European capitalists investing in the state, the editor predicted a rise in wages, the establishment of mills on every stream, and more employment opportunities. 72

"The Coming Deliverance" 73 did not arrive then, despite Dawson's best efforts. On November 3, 1874, Daniel H. Chamberlain was elected for a two-year term as governor of South Carolina. The first phase of his strange relationship with Frank Dawson, that of enmity and distrust, soon was to end.

72 Editorials, News and Courier, October 14, 1874; October 16, 1874, p. 2.
73 Headline, News and Courier, October 31, 1874, p. 2.
While silent on the Chamberlain victory, Dawson soon made efforts to reach the ear of the governor-elect. Writing to his wife from Columbia in late November, the journalist commented on "a long and very pleasant talk" with Chamberlain.

Despite the increasingly optimistic appraisals of the new administration emanating from The News and Courier's Columbia correspondent, its editor did not demonstrate a change in his public antagonism toward the victorious candidate until the new governor's inaugural Address on December 1.

In that Address, Chamberlain gave primary attention to the need for "economy and honesty" in government, a need which he maintained was chiefly a matter of good administration in adhering to and enforcing the state constitution and existing laws. He promised immediate attention to the problem of taxation. While upholding the state's system of basing the tax rate on the true value of property, he declared that values had been fixed too high in the past to conceal the "real extent of the burden of taxation" and offered his pledge to appoint "honest and competent officers." Moreover, he recommended the election rather than the appointment of County Auditors and Treasurers.

In other specific proposals, Chamberlain advocated a special levy of taxes for each public expenditure rather than a general levy, a

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1 F. W. Dawson to Sarah Dawson, November 22, 1874, Dawson Papers.

2 For example, see News and Courier, November 30, 1874, p. 1.
shorter legislative session for the sake of economy, a General Incorporation Act to facilitate the development of manufacturing and industry within the state, a new registration of voters, neglected since 1868, and continued efforts toward improving the state's educational system. Pledging to honor the state debt, Chamberlain announced his intentions of abolishing deficit spending and of calling for an investigation into legislative expenses. 3

Since many of these proposals had been demanded in the columns of The News and Courier for several years, it would have been difficult for the editor to criticize Chamberlain's declarations. Instead Dawson expressed his "heartfelt satisfaction" that the new governor had exposed existing evils and had justified the "condemnation" of those who had ruled for six years. Beginning to hedge on his earlier opposition to Chamberlain, the editor affirmed that the policies suggested in the Inaugural would bring "satisfaction and cheerfulness to every honest citizen, in the measure in which he believes that the programme of reform will be faithfully carried out." Citing as especially praiseworthy the promises to reduce expenditures, to implement a new registration of voters, and to honor the settlement of the public debt, Dawson expressed his belief that Chamberlain could live up to his promises and more. Furthermore, even if some Republicans could

not be counted on to uphold the Governor's efforts, he wrote:

...we say to him now that, so long as he walks on the line that he has marked out for himself, he will have the active support of the Conservative members of the General Assembly, and likewise the moral support, the aid and the comfort of the sixty thousand Conservatives whom those members represent.

This editorial comment on the Inaugural Address ended with the pledge that since Chamberlain could provide an efficient and economical administration, the Conservatives would not contribute to the "difficulties" which the Governor was bound to encounter. 4

The first test of these mutual, tentative expressions of good will was not long in arising. The Charleston circuit bench was vacant, and speculation was that a Republican internal struggle was in progress over the election of a new judge. Even prior to the Inaugural Address, The News and Courier's Columbia correspondent reported on "good authority" that Chamberlain would sanction "any good man" recommended by the Charleston delegation to the General Assembly. 5 On December 7 the same writer declared that Chamberlain favored James P. Reed of Anderson despite the efforts made in behalf of more "regular" Republicans as Elihu Baker, choice of State Senator Whittemore, or W. J. Whipper, candidate of Charleston Sheriff Bowen's clique. 6 Dawson responded editorially on the following day warning of the grave danger to the state and circuit if a competent man, free from the taint of "Ring"

5 News and Courier, November 30, 1874, p. 1.
support, were not selected.\textsuperscript{7}

On December 10, the breach within Republican ranks was openly exposed. Chamberlain, despite the advice of friends,\textsuperscript{8} determined to exert his leadership and attended a public caucus of the legislature being held to discuss candidates for the Charleston post. Although the meeting opened with band music and on a note of hilarity, anti-Chamberlain sentiments on the part of many of his fellow Republicans soon became evident. Rising to speak in favor of his choice, Reed, and to oppose the election of Whipper or Baker as he insisted that the Republicans had no right to choose a judge merely on the basis of his party loyalty, Chamberlain was quickly interrupted by shouts of those who claimed they would not be dictated to by the Governor. W. J. Whipper denounced Chamberlain, calling the Governor's attack on him "base and foul." The crowd, reported the Columbia correspondent, cheered " vociferously." The Governor, notwithstanding this tumult, maintained that Whipper's qualifications as a Republican were not in question but rather his ability to fill "the most important judgeship in the State" after the Chief Justiceship. This occasion, Chamberlain explained, was the first opportunity to take action on the Republican platform pledges of reform. The caucus which had begun so pleasantly adjourned upon showing the beginning of "decided symptoms of a riot."\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} Editorial, \textit{News and Courier}, December 8, 1874, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{8} Allen, \textit{Governor Chamberlain's Administration}, p. 39.

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{News and Courier}, December 11, 1874; December 12, 1874, p. 1; Allen, \textit{Governor Chamberlain's Administration}, pp. 39-41.
With much joy, The News and Courier announced on December 12 that Reed, a lifelong Democrat only recently turned Republican, had been elected with the aid of the Conservatives who, when they understood that "the administration was attacked, and in danger of defeat,... rallied to the support of Colonel Reed, and their votes decided the election against Whipper." On the editorial page, Dawson declared: "For the victory that was won, the people must thank Governor Chamberlain, as well as the minority in the Legislature." Since the Conservatives could not hope to elect one of their own choosing, Dawson insisted, they were wise in supporting the one of the candidates "who had most to recommend him." All honest men held a higher opinion of Chamberlain than they did a week ago, declared the editor, for his pledges of reform now seemed more credible. "In one striking instance the word has ripened into action." 10

Two days later, Dawson continued his still uncertain praise of the Governor assuring his readers that the judicial election had settled two things. First, Chamberlain was "disposed" to fulfill his reform pledges "if he can," and secondly, "he can make them good if he will." Commenting on the Governor's unexpected "boldness and decision of character," Dawson promised cooperation with Chamberlain or "any body of men" who would appoint competent officials, propose good legislation, and promote "rigid economy," but the editor, not yet fully convinced, threatened opposition should the Governor change his ways. 11

10 News and Courier, December 12, 1874, pp. 1,2.

period of mutual attraction had begun, but both parties were still wary.

The first month of the new year 1875 saw further praise for Chamberlain in the columns of The News and Courier, and at the end of that month in a slashing editorial entitled "Go Home," Dawson accused the legislature of preventing Chamberlain from carrying out his program of reform. The Governor thanked Dawson for this editorial and expressed his belief that: "Our great difficulty will lie in that direction."

Hoping for an early adjournment of the legislature, he did not think it a realistic hope but encouraged The News and Courier to continue its chastisement of that body.  

Early in February Chamberlain made specific proposals for cutting down expenditures as the consideration of an appropriations bill pended in the legislature. His recommendations were published in a Columbia newspaper on February 7, and, on that same day, the Governor wrote a letter marked "Private" to the Charleston editor. In this confidential message, he asked for Dawson's help, stating his belief that for the "public good," responsible citizens should hold the legislature, especially its Regular Republican members, "to a sharp and strict accountability" on the matter of his recommended spending cuts. He urged Dawson to do "all in your power" to help to reduce appropriations to the level of state income. "Members should be made to feel that they will be watched and their names paraded and remembered if they fail of


13 Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration, pp. 71-73.
their duty in this respect." Aware that Dawson need not be instructed
in the art of journalistic pressure tactics, Chamberlain did not spell
out further a line of attack. He concluded with a flattering obser-
vation, writing: "My sole object is to give good government to S. C.
and I believe that is yours too."14

Dawson responded to the plea quickly. On February 9 he challenged
the Republicans in the legislature to cooperate with the Governor so
that they might prove that South Carolina Republicanism was no longer
"rotten to the core." Claiming that the Conservatives had supported
Chamberlain in proof of their lack of partisan motives, Dawson had
further praise for the Governor. He not only talked reform, Dawson
observed, he also acted reform.15

Nor did the editor's response end there. On February 11 he warned
that members of the legislature who voted against a reduction in
appropriations would be "marked men...if their names are not known in
every corner of the State, it will not be our fault or theirs." The
following day brought still another denunciation of the legislature in
the paper's editorial page as Dawson protested that none of Chamberlain's
"excellent recommendations" had yet been acted upon. Scornfully, he
urged "Let the responsibility lie where it is due." Not yet content,
in still another editorial the indefatigable editor listed the Radicals
he believed particularly objectionable and the reasons therefor.16

14 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, Columbia, February 7,
1875, Dawson Papers.

15 Editorial, News and Courier, February 9, 1874, p. 2.

16 Editorials, News and Courier, February 11, 1875; February 12,
1875; February 15, 1875; p. 2.
Furthermore, crediting the South Carolina Conservatives for their occupation of "a lofty and...generous position," Dawson reaffirmed the nonpartisan, cooperationist approach to which his realistic appraisal of state politics had led him. The Conservatives, he asserted:

...cling to their political faith and will not desert it, but they look, first of all, to the interests of the State; they recognize honesty and merit wherever they are found, and when they see a fearless and farsighted man, in the ranks of the opposing party, making a gallant stand against the onslaught of thieves and rogues, they group themselves around him, and pledge to him, as they may, their steady and continuous support.\(^{17}\)

Meanwhile, dissident Republicans were developing a line of attack themselves. In mid-February, they launched this attack on F. L. Cardozo, the Negro State Treasurer and valued confidant of Chamberlain. Dawson evidently took the opportunity of questioning the Governor as to the validity of the charges against the Treasurer. In a lengthy reply, Chamberlain responded to the charges. He insisted that Cardozo, to the best of his knowledge, was doing an honest and efficient job as Treasurer. The motive behind the charges, according to Chamberlain, was that "there is nothing this winter in the way of plunder here in Columbia."\(^{18}\) In another letter of which only a fragment survives, Chamberlain stated that for most of those now "hounding" the Treasurer, the motive was "rage" at his refusal to join with them "in devising ways and means for stealing." The Governor acknowledged that few men in his party really


\(^{18}\) D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, February 18, 1875, Dawson Papers.
meant to fulfill their campaign pledges. They "sang that song" of reform from necessity "not because they loved it." But, the Governor declared, Cardozo really "meant to improve the condition of the state" believing that "party success and good personal character" both required redemption of the pledges. "He has consistently held to that view," the Governor continued, "and is today the wisest and keenest advisor I have," as well as the most loyal. Furthermore, the Governor wrote, nothing but "the power of my office and the support which the Conservatives and the Country at large" gave him kept these malcontents from attacking him instead of Cardozo.19

Dawson did not fail him. In an editorial printed on February 20 the journalist declared, without mentioning his correspondence with Chamberlain, that "political chadorbrands" who had misjudged the reform intentions of their Governor were seeking to strike at their leader through an attack on Cardozo, Chamberlain's "faithful and zealous co-adjutor." Using the Governor's own theme, Dawson maintained that only knowledge of the Governor's "strength in and out of the State" kept the dissidents from seeking to impeach Chamberlain instead. Those who denounced Cardozo, wrote the editor paraphrasing the letter, did so because raids on the Treasury had been halted.20

As the Cardozo affair raged on, Dawson had further recourse to the two Chamberlain letters on the matter. On February 25, he wondered


20 Editorial, News and Courier, February 20, 1875, p. 2.
editorially why no mention was made in the Legislative Investigating Committee report as to the possible misdeeds of Comptroller-General Hoge, a question no doubt prompted by a passage in the Chamberlain letter of February 18. On March 1 an editorial appeared in which, while Dawson disclaimed any attempt to assess guilt or innocence in the matter until all the evidence was available, there was attributed to an unnamed lawyer of much ability a lengthy passage lifted directly from the same Chamberlain letter. Needless to say, the passage exonerated Cardozo's actions. The editor commented that although he did not believe Cardozo guilty of corruption, perhaps he had been negligent in some respects.21

During the next ten days Dawson wavered in his position on the Cardozo matter, seemingly unwilling to be totally convinced of the Treasurer's innocence.22 On March 10, however, Chamberlain granted an interview with a News and Courier reporter. The Governor declared that it would be "dammable cowardice" for him to shirk his responsibility towards Cardozo since he had examined all the evidence and could "find nothing to shake my faith in Mr. Cardozo's honesty." Everyone in Columbia knew, Chamberlain insisted, that the motive behind the attack on Cardozo was "not a desire to guard the Treasury." Calling the editorial position of The News and Courier "perfectly fair and just," Chamberlain asserted that the Conservatives had adopted a course of

21 Editorials, News and Courier, February 25, 1875; March 1, 1875, p. 2.

22 For example, see editorials, News and Courier, March 3, 1875; March 6, 1875, p. 2.
great political generosity and patriotism toward me and my Administration." 23

Dawson's editorial response to the interview was all that the embattled Chamberlain could have wished. Although the journalist still insisted that he would suspend judgment until all evidence was submitted, he declared that the Cardozo championship by the Governor was convincing for more than one reason. First, the Governor's "boldness, persistency, and fidelity" since his inauguration entitled Chamberlain's opinion to great weight; secondly, the defense, in light of the Governor's access to information unavailable to the Investigating Committee or the public, strengthened a belief in Cardozo's innocence. Finally, Chamberlain's acknowledged legal skill and the sure "political ruin" which would fall upon him if he supported an erring state official were important factors in Dawson's evaluation of the gubernatorial rebuttal of charges against the Treasurer. Pledging the continuance of "our confidence and our personal and moral support in every form" to the Governor, Dawson affirmed that only "evidence, facts" would "compel us to lose faith in Governor Chamberlain." 24 Three days later he warned Conservatives not to "cut the foundation from under Gov. Chamberlain" by voting for the removal of Cardozo and declared that, if they did so, the Conservatives would be motivated solely by partisan concerns, not the public interest. 25

24 Editorial, News and Courier, March 12, 1875, p. 2.
Dawson commented gleefully on March 22 that his warning had been heeded as only three Conservatives joined the losing vote in the attempt to remove Cardozo. The action proved, Dawson contended, the fidelity of Conservatives to honest men of whatever party. Their decision was equally welcome in that it lent support to the Governor and blocked the plans of some of "the worst men" in the state.26

Understandably, the growing personal affinity between the editor and the Governor was not publically acknowledged. For example, Dawson claimed that the March 12 interview with Chamberlain indicated that "the Executive himself holds the views that we had already formed" regarding the motives of the anti-Cardozo group. The editor failed to mention that his views had been shaped, at least in part, by private communications with the Governor.27

As the spring of 1875 advanced, Dawson became more and more convinced of the Governor's sincerity and gave his hearty editorial approval to Chamberlain's vetoes of the Bank of Deposit bill, the so-called Bonanza bill, and the bill which proposed to tamper with the announced settlement of the state debt.28

The Bank of Deposit bill would have negated one of Chamberlain's earliest executive decisions by requiring that all state funds be deposited in two Columbia banks. The Governor had redistributed the

28 Editorials, News and Courier, March 8, 1875; March 18, 1875; March 27, 1875, p. 2.
majority of state deposits among five banks, two in Columbia and three in Charleston. The Bonanza bill proposed a commission to adjudicate claims against the state amassed by the Moses regime. In vetoing it Chamberlain asserted both that the Commissioners named in the act "did not command my confidence" and that he considered a majority of the claims to be "vast frauds." Finally, in late March, the Governor vetoed the bill which would tamper with the final adjustment of the public debt previously agreed upon and which Republicans had promised to uphold in their 1874 platform. "I, at least," contended the Governor, "must stand by my pledges...."

On March 30, reviewing the Chamberlain Administration to date, Dawson labeled it a "signal success." He congratulated the Governor for thwarting the Radicals' "worst schemes" with his "tact, boldness, and persistence" and the help of Conservatives and honest Republicans.

The Charleston business community for which Dawson spoke was not slow in acknowledging a debt of gratitude to Chamberlain. The New England Society of Charleston invited him to speak at their dinner in March, and, while he could not accept, James Simons, the President, made a glowing speech in the Governor's behalf.

29 Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration, pp. 88-92; 94-98; 99.
31 Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration, pp. 116, 125, 128; Reynolds, Reconstruction in South Carolina, p. 300.
Ironically, in light of his earlier denunciations, Dawson now became the defender of Chamberlain. Deploiring the action of the New York Sun in printing correspondence from that "decayed" renegade politician, R. H. Kirk, Dawson revealed that Kirk played both sides of the fence during the 1874 state election. According to the journalist, Kirk, a man with an "elastic conscience and mendacious pen," had brought the Charleston editor a reported conversation with candidate Chamberlain. The editor deemed it so patently untrue that The News and Courier refused it "even in the heat of those days." After his failure to be included in the Chamberlain Administration, continued the editor, Kirk resumed his denunciation of the Governor. However, he offered to desist were he given "a place worth one hundred dollars a month." 32

By early May, Dawson was completely in the Chamberlain camp. This political flirtation had blossomed with the springtime and became a full-fledged courtship when Dawson publically repudiated his earlier position in regard to Chamberlain on May 14.

There were increasing signs that such a move was in the offing. On May 1, while not mentioning Chamberlain's name, Dawson wrote that Conservatives could forgive "sins of omission. They make allowance for party ties and personal friendships, and will not place the seal of their condemnation of officers whose sole fault was a mistake or an error in judgment." The forgiveness, of course, did not extend to

32 Editorial, News and Courier, April 9, 1875, p. 2.
those who systematically plundered. Further, in an editorial entitled “Savoir Faire,” Dawson credited the Governor with “saying and doing the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way.” Singling out Chamberlain’s phrase, written in response to the invitation of a Charleston group to address them: “Every man is my political friend whose purpose it is to give peace and prosperity to South Carolina,” Dawson proclaimed that such well-expressed sentiments compared favorably with the immortal words of the Founding Fathers. Such a Governor, a man of force and culture, was “more than South Carolina ever expected to have under Republican rule.”

Quite naturally, Chamberlain was pleased to read such effusive words, and he quickly wrote the editor requesting five or six extra copies of that issue. “The real pleasure,” said the Governor, was to find “so skilful (sic) and appreciative a critic.” Continued Chamberlain, “I can well retort ‘Savoir Faire’ to you.” Pledging his veto of the Tax Bill enacted in the previous legislative session, he encouraged Dawson to state publically that he would carry out his intention as soon as the new legislature met. Chamberlain ended his letter with a request: “Let me serve you in any way that is right and proper --- which is all of course which you would ask. Cela va sans dire.”

Indeed, the affair was in flower.

Dawson was propelled into his public statement renouncing all prior opposition to the Governor and retracting previous assertions of

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33 Editorials, News and Courier, May 1, 1875; May 6, 1875, p. 2.
wrongdoing by charges published in the Washington Star and the New York Sun in early May. Evidently concerned about the accusation that Chamberlain would prevent prosecution of those involved in the 1868-1872 frauds since he had also participated in them, Dawson wrote to the Governor. On May 11 Chamberlain responded with a request that The News and Courier reply to the charges of the Star. Protesting his innocence, the Republican insisted, "My evils have heretofore come from the friendship of bad men. Perhaps I shall fare better if I now have their hatred." He blamed Kirk, Patterson, and Scott for the attacks, the basis for which was their disappointment that his campaign pledges "have not been proved lies," assured the Governor. He therefore granted his permission for the editor to speak "broadly and positively" in denying such reports but asked not to be quoted directly in the paper. He preferred to have his "friends who believe in me" act as his spokesmen until charges were brought by "some responsible person" at which time he would personally deny the charges.

Thanking Dawson for his help, Chamberlain could not resist indicating the line which he believed would be most effective in countering the reports. "I should like it treated as a matter which deserves consideration only in order that the public may not be deceived and the reform movement in South Carolina discredited with our good friends abroad." Perhaps Chamberlain felt he had gone too far in dictating an editorial position to Dawson since as he closed his lengthy letter, he reaffirmed his dedication to reform and the welfare of the state, adding "Write of me as you feel, and I shall doubtless have no cause
Chamberlain was correct in this last comment. On May 14 Dawson published a sweeping repudiation of his previous charges and opposition to the election of Chamberlain declaring: "It is our fixed belief that Mr. Chamberlain has never, in great things or little, consented to, or aided in any fraud against this people." It was "morally impossible" that Chamberlain could have been either "facile or corrupt" as Attorney-General, argued Dawson, in view of his acts since assuming the governorship. "Such a man as he is can never have been the man we did believe him to be," apologized the editor. He bolstered his case with further arguments. Chamberlain, as a perceptive man, must have realized that he would face untold wrath if he cut loose from the Radical rogues. Thus, it would have been "supreme folly" to antagonize such opponents if there were anything in his past that might later be brought into the open and expose him to the risk of being "ground to dust" between the Conservatives and the Radicals. Those who oppose honesty in government are the "vagabond correspondents" whose attacks on Chamberlain were appearing in the Northern press, and Dawson called upon both the Star and the Sun to make their charges concrete so that Chamberlain might answer them. Until that time, Dawson thundered, the press should not "stab South Carolina in the back" by encouraging disreputable malcontents who sought to malign "the only Republican officer of eminent ability, eminent culture, and eminent integrity that the North has given to this people."36


Thus, Dawson not only embraced the reform acts of Chamberlain as Governor but also threw a protective mantle over Chamberlain's earlier activities in South Carolina. The editor was not to deviate from his new position.

Chamberlain was prompt in expressing his thanks for this complete editorial support. Although asserting that the May 14 article was "more than I could have asked for or expected," Chamberlain hastened to add "it is true." Yet, he noted cryptically, "as far as the scope of it is concerned." Aside from its public value, the Governor continued, the article was "doubly valuable to me privately," since both he and Dawson were aware that its sentiments were "the result of conviction and not of bargain." The letter concluded "Let the tongue of the world wag as it will," the expression of confidence was a "precious fact to men who are trying to use their power for the good of all their fellow-citizens."^37

Of course, Dawson's defense did not entirely halt criticism of the Governor, and in early June the New York Sun published a letter which the Governor purportedly had written to H. H. Kimpton some years earlier. This letter alluded to a proposed financial conspiracy to control several South Carolina railroad lines, a conspiracy which Chamberlain soon repudiated when, according to a letter to Dawson, he discovered the "treachery" of his partners. Assuming the editor that there was "nothing sinister" in the planned coup, Chamberlain called it "pure speculation," and a "very unwise one" at that. The Governor asked

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Dawson to use his own judgment in treating the Kimpton letter. He vigorously denied any imputation of fraud, declaring: "That I hoped to make money --- dreamed of thousands --- there is no doubt, but I never knew of or consented to any transaction even in that connection, which involved any injury to the State as I then understood it."  

Dawson had previously attacked the motives of those airing their stories in the columns of the "sadly duped" Sun.  Now with Chamberlain's explanatory letter, the editor, absolutely convinced, leapt to the defense in earnest. The Sun's sole purpose, he wrote, was to "ruin" the Governor and those who supported him because of his honesty. The infamous Kimpton letter, he asserted, might or might not be authentic, but even if genuine, it certainly did not propose a criminal plan. If the Governor had, in the early 1870's, entered into an association to buy up railroads, proclaimed The News and Courier, "This is no crime!" The Kimpton letter meant nothing whatever without proof that Chamberlain, as a syndicate member, had used corrupt means or helped others to attain their goals illegally. Could Dawson have completely forgotten his own alleged "facts" concerning railroad stock sales which he had published during the campaign?  

Significantly, in light of the Chamberlain letter of June 9 which must have then been resting on his desk, Dawson deplored the fact that there was no Republican paper in the state capable of defending the

38 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, June 9, 1875, Dawson Papers.

Governor. He continued, "we who have no esoteric information, and whose motives, because of our former opposition to the Governor, are always open to misconception," must assume the role of defending Chamberlain "from a sense of duty." Assuring his readers that there was no personal gain or loss in his championship of the Governor, Dawson insisted "The loss or the gain is to the people of the State." 40

It was not Dawson alone whom Chamberlain courted. At this same time, the Washington Light Infantry of Charleston was planning to send a delegation to the centennial celebration of the Battle of Bunker Hill at the invitation of Boston officials. The delegation, representing an organization which listed many of Charleston's elite as members, were to carry with them the famed Eutaw flag, only surviving battle standard of the Revolutionary War. This further token of reconciliation had been hailed throughout the country. Governor Chamberlain used the opportunity to present a new South Carolina flag to the Washington Light Infantry to accompany the proud Eutaw standard. Significantly, it was Frank Dawson who carried the Chamberlain donation at the presentation ceremonies in Charleston. 41

As the summer of 1875 passed, Dawson continued his wholehearted espousal of the Chamberlain cause, although he did take advantage of an

40 Editorial, News and Courier, June 11, 1875, p. 2.

41 Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration, p. 132; News and Courier, June 14, 1875, p. 1; D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, June 17, 1875, Dawson Papers.
opportunity which the Governor offered him for criticism. Chamberlain had written the editor about his forthcoming address at Yale, informing him that since the two "must not be too good friends," there was room for an honest difference of opinion on Chamberlain's "allusions to reconstruction" in that speech. As usual, Dawson accepted the Governor at his word, and on July 9 editorially disagreed with Chamberlain's remarks on the wisdom of Negro suffrage. However, Dawson hastened to add that he would not propose to change the effect since he believed that the Negroes would soon swing behind the white minority. 42

Dawson still was wary of the danger posed by the repeated attacks of Republican dissidents. He warned his subscribers not to fall into their trap by refusing to trust the Governor simply because a citizen might not be "satisfied with the conduct of Attorney-General Chamberlain." 43

Nonetheless, according to a published interview with the Governor, most influential Conservatives sided with him and had given him "effective and absolutely indispensable aid." Of Conservative opposition to him, the Governor stated: "There are dozens of letters lying on this table from the best and most trusted men of this State depreciating such a course, and assuring me of their ardent and constant support." 44 Whether Dawson had marshalled this support or merely verbalized it, there is no question that such sentiments existed as was soon to become

42 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, June 24, 1875, Dawson Papers; Editorial, News and Courier, July 9, 1875, p. 2.
43 Editorial, News and Courier, August 24, 1875, p. 2.
44 News and Courier, August 24, 1875, p. 1.
increasingly evident.

In September, however, reports of a movement to nominate a purely Conservative local ticket in Charleston County were circulated. Dawson strenuously opposed such a course and mounted a strong defense in response to criticism that The News and Courier had capitulated to the Republicans. He declared that those who opposed cooperation were simply greedy for public office and spoils. He demonstrated the benefits of earlier cooperation by pointing to the election of five conservatives to the House of Representatives in 1874, a by-product of the Independent Republican movement. The editor expressed his belief that an alliance between Conservatives and Reform Republicans, in which each party maintained its own identity, could be indefinitely sustained so long as both groups acted honorably. Public interest as well as "personal honor and political good faith" dictated the continuation of a cooperationist effort, Dawson insisted.45

Day after day Dawson hammered on this theme, although he did assert that should the Independent Republicans fail to allot proportional representation to their Conservative allies, his paper would withdraw its support of a cooperationist policy.46 As sentiment for a completely Democratic effort in 1876, the Straightout policy, received increasing attention, Dawson likewise widened his arguments for cooperation. Most Conservatives, he believed, preferred to continue their organizational

45 Editorial, News and Courier, September 20, 1875, p. 2.

46 Editorials, News and Courier, September 21, 1875; September 22, 1875; September 23, 1875; p. 2.
procedures and would work for national Democratic candidates. Dawson saw the benefits of organization primarily in terms of making it "practicable" to support the Democracy's Presidential ticket in 1876 "without tying the State, hard and fast, to Democratic nominations for State officers." 47

Three days later the editor withdrew somewhat from this firing line position. Announcing that it was the newspaper's policy to pursue the wisest and best policy, Dawson nevertheless pledged irrevocably to abide by the decision of a Conservative convention regarding the 1876 election. A bit wistfully, as though he might already have foreseen that the emotions aroused by the upcoming elections would be difficult to channel, Dawson reminded his readers that in every election since 1868, the Conservatives had followed the advice of The News and Courier. 46

The next few weeks found Dawson tirelessly pouring out stronger and stronger appeals for the alliance ticket in the local Charleston election. He was not alone. A petition appeared on October 1 urging support for the local cooperationist effort which sought to place eight Conservatives in office as an integral addition to the Independent Republican ticket. This petition was signed by many of Charleston's leading citizens; names such as J. Adger Smyth, W. D. Porter, and James Connor would emerge again as proponents of a realistic, cooperationist approach on the state level as well. 49

46 Editorial, News and Courier, September 27, 1875, p. 2.
49 News and Courier, October 1, 1875, p. 4.
The alliance ticket carried, and Dawson rejoiced that confidence was now possible since "Confidence and peace are essential to commercial greatness." In soaring hopes and prose, he rhapsodized that Charleston would now go "to the heights of mercantile supremacy in the South." 50

Turning from the successful local canvass to what was obviously becoming a burning question, that of espousal of a Straightout, Conservative ticket in 1876, Dawson listed his thoughts which would be constantly reiterated in the months to come. First he advocated "thorough organization" of the Conservative Party from the grass roots level, no matter what course the party might take. Secondly, he insisted that this reorganization not be undertaken too rapidly in order to avoid forcing Independent Republicans to take alarm. Thirdly, he emphatically reserved to the state Conservative Convention the power to determine the most effective policy and maintained that all Conservatives must be bound by its decision. The News and Courier would, however, urge cooperation until the Convention spoke. Lastly, he argued against resuming the name Democratic Party since such action, he believed, would simply serve to consolidate the Radicals. 51 Several days later, Dawson found himself forced to defend this announced policy. He denied the implication that the Conservatives

50 Editorial, News and Courier, October 7, 1875, p. 2.
51 Editorial, News and Courier, October 13, 1875, p. 2.
and Independent Republicans were fusing or amalgamating, declaring that, while the two might act together, each party respected the other's "rights and duties."

Dawson might indeed speak for the powerful Charleston business community, but the demands for a purely Conservative, or Democratic, effort were growing in those up-country areas of the state for which the Anderson Intelligencer and the Greenville News spoke. These journals were outspoken in their demands for a Straightout ticket. Typically, Dawson called the demands "no doubt sincere, but...not discreet." That these up-country areas possessed small Democratic majorities doubtless had quite a lot to do with their criticism of Dawson's program.

But, much as Dawson embraced the Chamberlain and cooperationist cause, the coat of immunity did not cover all Republicans. In an editorial entitled "Peacocks and Crows," which Chamberlain considered "wonderfully effective," Dawson spoke many kind words about Attorney-General S. W. Melton and Comptroller-General T. C. Dunn, but he warned that their reform activities must continue lest "their new coats be stripped from their backs." Pointing out several areas of investigation

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52 Editorial, News and Courier, October 16, 1875, p. 2.

53 Editorial, News and Courier, May 22, 1876. See also editorials October 14, 1875; November 19, 1875, p. 2.

54 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, October 11, 1875, Dawson Papers.
which the editor considered deserving of further inquiry and prosecution, he demanded that these men prove their reform words with action. 55

Continuing his blasts at these state officials throughout October 56 perhaps in reaction to the growing criticism of his alliance with the Republicans, Dawson must have been cheered by the encouraging response which he received from the Governor in that regard. 57

It was during this period also that further evidence of the mutual esteem as well as interdependence of the two men appeared. Dawson evidently wrote to Chamberlain suggesting the names of a group of men whom he considered worthy to serve as Commissioners in planning South Carolina's participation in the upcoming Centennial celebration in Philadelphia. Chamberlain responded with approval and agreed that, to insure success, Commission appointments would require "the larger part to be from the Conservatives, but that is no objection with me." 58

When the list of those chosen to serve was published several weeks later, it was indeed composed mainly of Conservatives, and Dawson informed his readers that the Commissioners were selected "with the view of encouraging the white citizens of the state to give active support to the Exposition...." 59

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55 Editorial, News and Courier, October 11, 1875, p. 2.

56 See, for example, editorials, News and Courier, October 20, 1875; October 22, 1875; October 23, 1875, p. 2.

57 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, October 19, 1875, Dawson Papers.

58 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, October 11, 1875, Dawson Papers.

The Governor visited Charleston on November 4 and 5, and his welcome was warm. Following a serenade by some 5000 citizens and other festivities, Chamberlain delivered an address. It surely must have fallen on receptive ears at the Charleston Chamber of Commerce, an organization which boasted a membership roll that included the names of the leading businessmen of the city as well as Frank Dawson. In his speech Chamberlain, in addition to welcoming support from all men of whatever political inclination, echoed a frequent theme of Dawson. High taxes, the Governor intoned, affected the poor as much as the more prosperous by driving away investors of capital. He said, "What is really good for the chief capitalist of this city in matters of government, is good for all, however poor or obscure." Following this Chamberlain visit, Dawson resumed his editorial opposition to the Straightout movement then being discussed in the state press. Urging a "watch and wait" policy, he condemned a Conservative state ticket unless a "great emergency" arose "which cannot now be foreseen," Dawson counselled that a Straightout movement might set South Carolina back a decade or more in her efforts toward economic and political redemption. Insisting again that the "declared policy" of the Conservative Party was to promote honest government, "not party supremacy," Dawson proclaimed that he would not advocate a Straightout ticket unless it became evident that

60 Reynolds, Reconstruction in South Carolina, p. 300.

61 News and Courier, November 15, 1875, p. 1.
"needed reforms" could only be obtained in that way. 62

Thus toward the end of 1875 according to one observer, many South Carolinians were greatly encouraged by Chamberlain's actions and disdained the policies of a "small but determined body of Democrats" who demanded a return to Conservative rule. One year under Chamberlain had led the state "to take a long step toward redemption." 63

Meantime in Columbia, matters within the Republican Party were rushing to a head. Chamberlain forced the legislature to reduce the rate of state taxation to eleven mills. 64 Then, while the Governor journeyed to Greenville to present an award, "a single act like a spark on a tobacco barn set the whole State ablaze." 65

This igniting spark was the election by the legislature, in violent disregard of the Governor's expressed wishes, of eight circuit judges including W. J. Whipper to the Charleston bench, and former Governor Moses to another low country seat on December 17, 1875.

Reaction was swift. This election marked the beginning of the end for a cooperationist alliance, although it did not at first appear

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62 Editorials, News and Courier, November 22, 1875; November 8, 1875; December 14, 1875, p. 2.
63 Davis, "Campaign of 1876."
65 Davis, "Campaign of 1876."
so. For once, Dawson's angry rhetoric knew no bounds of restraint or moderation. "The plan" of the Republican scoundrels in the legislature, he thundered, "is to Africanize this South Carolina, to make it and keep it a Black Republic, to put the white man under the splay foot of the negro and hold him there." In this same outburst, Dawson disclaimed his editorial stand against a partisan struggle published just four days earlier, and, dropping the euphemistic term "Conservative", called upon the "Democratic party" to reorganize swiftly, to be "so drilled and officered that not a vote shall be lost."67

Yet Dawson did not repudiate Chamberlain. Indeed, the Governor's position was seemingly strengthened by his behavior at this critical moment. In an interview published on December 20, Chamberlain called the Whipper-Moses election "a disaster," the greatest "calamity" to occur anywhere in the South, and predicted that a revitalized Democracy would be the result. Still, he expressed the hope that the Democrats would help him fight this election.68

And on December 21 Chamberlain refused to sign the commissions of Whipper and Moses asserting that the incumbents of the respective benches to which the pair had been elected could not be replaced before

66 Simkins and Woody, South Carolina Reconstruction, p. 479; Davis, "Campaign of 1876."

67 Editorial, News and Courier, December 18, 1875, p. 2.

they had served a full four-year term even though they had been chosen to fill unexpired terms. This action would later be upheld by the state Supreme Court. 69

On that same evening he telegraphed the officers of the New England Society of Charleston his regrets at not being able to attend their scheduled dinner, adding "but if ever there was an hour when the spirit of the Puritanism, the spirit of undying, unconquerable enmity and defiance to wrong, ought to animate their sons, it is this hour, here in South Carolina. The civilization of the Puritan and the Cavalier, of the Roundhead and the Huguenot, is in peril. 70 That telegram, noted an observer, was the "triumphant clarion note, the paean of victory." 71

Dawson exploded in praise: "Governor Chamberlain has done for the people of South Carolina what no other living man could have done." The citizens owed to him "thanks eternal for interposing the shield of the Executive authority between the chieftans of the robber band in Columbia and the people of the low country of South Carolina." The editor urged an "outpouring" from the people of Charleston as a gesture of "vindication and approval" for the Governor's action. 72

This plea was not printed in vain. Signatures of prominent Charlestonians such as Robert Adger, S. Y. Tupper, W. L. Trenholm,

69 Simkins and Woody, South Carolina Reconstruction, p. 478.

70 Quoted in editorial, News and Courier, December 24, 1875, p. 2.

71 Davis, "Campaign of 1876."

and George W. Williams appeared on a telegram of gratitude and support sent the Governor. On December 28 a mass meeting at Charleston's Hibernian Hall heard its presiding officer, George W. Williams, speak in praise of Chamberlain as did James Conner, J. Adger Smyth, Rudolph Siegling and others. Dawson called this meeting the "largest and most influential meeting of white citizens" held in Charleston in the past ten years. 73

In an impassioned New Year's editorial, Dawson predicted in 1876 the beginning of a fight as "momentous" as the struggle for independence in 1776. If the attempt failed, South Carolina must be left to the Negroes because civilized men, wrote Dawson, could not continue to live "under the heel of the black scoundrels." 74

However, it was not in the editor's character to alienate South Carolina's Negro citizens. They had, after all, the right to vote. Denouncing "The Color Line," Dawson insisted that the whites welcomed support and aid from Negroes. He pledged that whatever the decision of the state Democratic Convention might be as to nominating a Straightout or a partial ticket, that party would have both a platform and candidates whom both races could trust. 75

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73 Editorial, News and Courier, December 23, 1875, p. 2; December 29, 1875, p. 1.

74 Editorial, News and Courier, January 1, 1876, p. 2.

75 Editorial, News and Courier, January 4, 1876, p. 2. This general position was shared by Wade Hampton. See Hampton W. Jarrell, Wade Hampton and the Negro: The Road Not Taken (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1950).
The state Democratic Committee, of which Dawson was at this
time a member, met in Columbia on January 6. In its "Address to
the People," that body reflected Dawson's views and echoed his
program for the party. Organization must be quickly established
beginning at the grass roots level, and no leaders would be chosen
until that reorganization was completed declared the Committee.
No policy for the coming campaign was determined upon at this
meeting for the members insisted that the decision would be made
by the state convention and would be binding on all Democrats.
This address also contained an abundance of praise for the
Governor and further pledged: "they declare their belief that
the Democracy of the State, rising above party, as he has done,
will give an unaltering support to his efforts as Governor...."76
CHAPTER 3: THE ESTRANGEMENT: SUMMER, 1876

Nevertheless, in January of 1876 times were changing. The Democrats, revitalized by the triumph in the judicial election, were calling into action emotional forces which had been quieted during the first year of Chamberlain's administration. Dawson, acknowledging the changing attitude, wrote:

Before Black Thursday the Democrats no doubt would have been willing, as a minority, to cooperate with the better class of Radicals. Now, seeing that this class is overridden and trampled upon, they expect the minority of upright Republicans to cooperate with the Democracy....¹

And Chamberlain was unquestionably a Republican as his published letter to Senator Morton of Indiana attempted to prove. Chamberlain had written to that Republican leader a strong rebuttal to charges arising from his refusal to commission W. J. Whipper and Franklin Moses and being bandied about in both the State and National party, that he had fallen in with the Democrats and had deserted his own party.² Dawson defended the Governor from criticism in the matter by the state press. He declared that it was no disgrace to be a Republican, for there were some good men of that party throughout the nation. As a Republican, Chamberlain could not be expected "to wantonly throw his influence against that party." Nevertheless,

¹ Editorial, News and Courier, January 29, 1876, p. 2.
² News and Courier, January 28, 1876, p. 1.
Dawson asserted, the "key" to the Governor's policy was: "Good Government with Republicanism, if practicable; but good Government in preference to Republicanism whenever the two are incompatible." The gravest danger to the state, the editor continued, would be overcome when "her people have the assurance that the Government will be pure and frugal, whether controlled by Republicans or Democrats." If Chamberlain were unable to provide this assurance, Dawson predicted that he would "abandon the rascally Republican leaders while remaining a Republican, and leave the field to the Democrats." Hence, concluded the editor, support for Chamberlain could not endanger the Democracy and simple justice demanded praise for his efforts. 3

Certainly, good Republican though he might claim to be, Chamberlain was in trouble within his own party. 4 Under the leadership of "Honest John" Patterson, 5 who fanned the coals of discontent among the Republican rank and file, an attempt was made in April to discredit Chamberlain by denying him membership on the delegation to the national Republican convention. The attempt failed because of a lengthy and fiery speech by the Governor, delivered at four in the morning, which provoked a tumultuous cry of "Chamberlain, Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, April 7, 1876, Dawson Papers.

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3 Editorial, News and Courier, February 7, 1876, p. 2. Italics in original.
4 Edward Hogan, "South Carolina Today," from The International Review, VIII (February, 1880), 107.
5 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, April 7, 1876, Dawson Papers.
Chamberlain, Chamberlain" from the delegates. He won his seat by a vote of eighty-nine to thirty-two. 6

Just as certainly, Chamberlain was "guilty," as some Republicans would have it, of cooperation with Conservatives. The incident involving the selection of the Centennial Commissioners is but one example. The Governor had also been planning, in concert with the Charlestonians, the overthrow of H. C. Worthington, collector of the port of Charleston. 7 On at least one occasion, Chamberlain, becoming nervous and overwrought due to "the excitement and hurry of politics" 8 and the unenviable task of maintaining his grip on his party while placating his restless Conservative allies, cried out: "I must stop, or I must act in such a way as a sensible politician would act." The issue at hand was relatively minor—the appointment of trial justices in Marion—and Chamberlain insisted that he must appoint some worthy Republicans since at least four of the nine Marion justices were already Conservatives. Speaking of several Democratic journals but excluding The News and Courier, the Governor protested, "To urge me to try to get the nomination of my party and

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6 Excellent descriptions of the proceedings are found in Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration, pp. 260-261; Williamson, After Slavery, pp. 404-405; and Simkins and Woody, South Carolina Reconstruction, pp. 483-484.

7 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, January 3, 1876, Dawson Papers.

8 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, April 7, 1876, Dawson Papers.
then to renounce me for taking only a small step in that direction, and one which does no harm to them, is idle."  

Dawson, like Chamberlain, had long recognized the dangerous political position into which the Governor's reforms had led him, and the editor attempted to counter criticism from both sides. He agreed with a resolution, to prohibit non-Democrats from carrying the Democratic standard in November, passed by an Anderson Democratic meeting in February. But his motives for concurring were probably different from those which prompted the resolution. "It would be folly," he declared, "to take a Republican and make him a Democratic candidate. Such a course would strip him of much of his strength with Republicans, while it is doubtful he could bring out the full Democratic vote."

Nonetheless, Dawson's candidate was unquestionably Chamberlain. What the Democrats needed was "success," he trumpeted in the same editorial, but there was nothing in "the principles or tenets" of that party to prevent a Democrat from "supporting some one nominee of an opposing party, if so inclined." South Carolinians would be a "miserably poor, weak set" if they could not "praise that in a Republican which we would sing songs over for years if done by a Democrat."  

Throughout the spring of 1876, the cry for unity, harmony, and organization within Democratic ranks was often heard from Dawson's

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10 Editorial, News and Courier, February 18, 1876, p. 2.
corner in Charleston. But, elsewhere there were signs of growing sentiment for a Straightout effort, a sentiment fanned by the abortive judicial election. Other factors were also at work in changing the political climate of the state, at least outside Charleston. Taxes were high, and cotton prices continued to decline while costs of production steadily rose and credit was difficult to obtain. Perhaps most significantly, Mississippi had recently overthrown her Negro government. All of these played some role in precipitating the Straightout movement and in the repudiating of the cooperation policy by many South Carolinians.

The very fervor of Dawson's arguments for cooperation indicate that he was desperately anxious over the coming campaign. Repeatedly, he attempted to stem the gathering flood by shaming those who might be tempted by the Straightout program. "The Democracy dare not go before the country with the declaration that they will not accept reform at Republican hands," he chastised. Such action would place them on the same level with Radical Republicans who judged "every measure by its effects on the party and not by its merits."

As the date for the May convention, scheduled by the executive committee at a February meeting, approached, Dawson began to urge that the decision be postponed still further. He believed that the

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11 For example, see editorials News and Courier, February 26, 1876; March 1, 1876; March 30, 1876; April 11, 1876, p. 2.

12 Williamson, After Slavery, p. 405.

13 Editorial, News and Courier, March 8, 1876, p. 2; see also March 13, 1876, p. 2.
wisest course would be to "watch and wait" until the Republicans had made their nominations, and he asked the convention to make no commitments beyond electing delegates to the national convention and members of the state executive committee.  

For the moment, Dawson, who always seemed to have "the sure knowledge of just what strings to strike," was to work his will despite the efforts of such Straightouters as Martin W. Gary and Alexander C. Haskell. It appeared that his fellow Democrats believed his assertion that if the South Carolina Democracy deviated from its expressed purpose of securing honest government, either by ignoring that goal or by seeking it by "impracticable paths," many white citizens would "melt away from the Democratic party...." The state convention, led by its President, General Kershaw, announced that it was too early to make a binding decision regarding the 1876 elections and confined itself to selecting delegates to the national convention.

With an almost audible sigh of relief, Dawson proclaimed proudly that The News and Courier stood in the ranks of the "faithful sons of South Carolina" along with men like Kershaw, James Conner, and others. The convention had been in danger of plunging into "untold

14 Editorials, News and Courier, April 19, 1876; April 28, 1876, p. 2.
15 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, p. 33.
16 Editorial, News and Courier, May 4, 1876, p. 2.
perplexities by committing it irrevocably to a fixed and settled course."
Fortunately, the "passionate element," which advocated this position, had been overcome by the "thoughtful prudence" of the majority, who were "resolved that zeal should not outrun discretion."

The editor attributed the wise decision of the convention to the fact that many of the delegates were farmers rather than lawyers, and, since farmers were patient men, "they do not look for their harvest when the seed is barely in the ground." Additionally, Dawson was immensely gratified by the unanimous adoption of the principle of independent county action, which freed local organizations to act "as they deem expedient" to secure more Democratic representation in the legislature and in local government. This action marked the "triumph of principle which The News and Courier was the first to advocate," its editor claimed.

In a closing plea for unity, Dawson foreshadowed his own eventual course. Prior to the campaign, he declared, there was room for disagreement within the party ranks. But, once the decision was taken, all Democrats must immediately "fall into line, and move forward quickly and steadily at the order of their chosen leaders." Dawson's views had prevailed and his untiring pen had won a temporary victory for expediency.

Yet, his opponents within the party, the "Radical Democrats" as he was to term them, were not crushed. Accordingly, he used his

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editorial columns even more often to pound home his beliefs. Chamberlain, contended Dawson, could not be defeated. Indeed, "the wilder the talk" of the Straightout advocates became, the more his strength grew and his election came to be a necessity to the Republicans. There would be no bolt within Republican ranks this time, the editor assured his readers. He summed up:

Add to the solid Republican vote, the power to obtain Federal troops as they may be needed, the Executive appointment of Commissioners of Election, the broad and undefined powers of the Board of State Canvassers, and what prospect is there that he could be defeated? It could be done in only one way: by armed force. For that the people are not ready, and if they were ready, such a course would end in disaster and ruin.

Dawson's solution was still the same—waive the selection of a Democratic gubernatorial candidate and concentrate on securing other offices. "In attempting to gain more," he cried, "we might lose everything."

Concluding this revealing editorial, Dawson put forth, most clearly, perhaps his deepest motive for opposing Straightout-ism. Acting as a spokesman for Charleston, he declared:

This is a Conservative community, and from it flows the capital which golds with grain or silvers with cotton the broad fields of the entire State. Straight-outism, with its threat and bluster, with its possible disturbances and certain turmoil, is the foe of mercantile security and commercial prosperity, and we are confident that, unless there be a marked change in the position of affairs, the
Conservative Democracy of Charleston (and there is none other worth counting) will oppose to the last the Radical Democratic policy of running, at any cost, a full Democratic ticket.\textsuperscript{19}

Indeed, the Charleston business clique was deeply afraid of political turmoil since experience had proved it disastrous to their trade and prosperity.\textsuperscript{20} For this basic reason, they had given their support to Chamberlain's attempts at orderly, legal reform efforts. Most, like Dawson, would continue to uphold the Governor until they were swept up by the emotions which had been building since December.

As May turned into June and tempers flared with the temperature, Dawson continued to use the same arguments, which he believed compelling,\textsuperscript{21} to counter the tide of Straightout-ism, flowing not from the Atlantic to the Piedmont but, indeed, just the reverse. Negro distrust of the Democracy, fanned by the Republicans, would never permit a total Democratic victory in November. The pragmatism of the editor led him to formulate a basic policy—"to avoid what is hazardous and impracticable, and seek the public good by such ways as are, however long and devious, accessible and safe."\textsuperscript{2} The gains of the past two years must be consolidated and increased: "This is the raison d'etre of the policy of political cooperation." What was practical, Dawson argued despite increasing opposition, was to waive a Democratic gubernatorial nomination, to make other state nominations after closely examining the Republican candidates, and to concentrate

\textsuperscript{19} Editorial, \textit{News and Courier}, May 9, 1876, p. 2. Italics in original.

\textsuperscript{20} Williamson, \textit{After Slavery}, p. 402.

\textsuperscript{21} Davis, "Campaign of 1876."
on efforts to elect Democratic county officers and members of the state legislature. Cooperation was the only reasonable course in counties having Negro majorities, he insisted. Furthermore, declared the man who was ever sensitive to public opinion, the country would support this struggle.22

A portion of the Straightout sentiment manifested itself, quite naturally, in attacks on the party loyalty of The News and Courier. Dawson hotly denied such allegations but they persisted. His journal, he countered, would be a Democratic paper "so long as any Democratic party is in existence in this State...." What he did claim for his newspaper was absolute independence of opinion because it was powerful enough to "await patiently" the moment "when the political truths it advocates and expounds, shall be everywhere recognized as meet and just and advantageous to the people of the State." Admitting that "Party shackles...sit very loosely on our limbs...." he reiterated, for the sake of the unity which he believed so indispensable, his pledge to support the decision of the State Convention "unflaggingly and cheerfully...."23

Yet, as the attacks upon the integrity of The News and Courier grew, Dawson stepped down from his lofty and somewhat uneasy perch to lash back at his detractors in more biting terms. It was "galling"

22 Editorial, News and Courier, June 5, 1876, p. 2.

23 Editorial, News and Courier, June 12, 1876, p. 2. For another defense of the paper's Democratic alignment, see editorial, July 3, 1876, p. 2.
he cried for his paper to be accused of having "sinister purposes" when its editors had "devoted ten of the best years" of their lives to working for the welfare of the state, when the paper had "poured out money like water" to elect Democratic candidates, and when its views reflected "those of the Charleston Democracy...."24

After pointedly publishing the state census figures and gubernatorial election returns over the past eight years,25 Dawson began lambasting his critics in earnest. Calling the Straightout movement "pernicious and suicidal," he described those who led it as a "small and active clique... who are bent on sending the State to perdition, unless they can save the State in their own way, and to their own personal benefit." He suggested that Radicals of the ilk of Patterson and Whittemore were contributing, through newspaper patronage, at least indirectly to the Straightout cause and thereby seeking through divisions to defeat the cooperationist attempt to secure an honest legislature.26

More and more irritably, as Dawson felt the reins of power slip through his fingers, he lashed out at such Straightouters as Editor Stokes of the Union Times. He was a man who, Dawson implied, was not to be trusted since he had not repaid a loan which the Charleston

24 Editorial, News and Courier, June 17, 1876, p. 2.
25 Editorials, News and Courier, June 19, 1876; June 20, 1876, p. 2.
26 Editorials, News and Courier, June 22, 1876; June 24, 1876, p. 2.
editor had made him to replace his burned out office several years before. A. C. Haskell and Wart Gary, two leading Straightout advocates, did not escape, either. Dawson scathingly commented that he was tired of lies told about The News and Courier "by people whose own houses are made of exceedingly brittle material," a scarcely veiled threat to retaliate.27

Going on the offensive in July, Dawson issued a series of ardent editorials in support of the Governor and his reform measures. Evidence from an earlier Chamberlain letter to Dawson suggests that the Governor himself supplied the facts and figures for the series which began on July 5 and ended on July 18. The alliance was still close; the Governor thanked Dawson for his "zeal and fidelity."28

Some Conservatives were offended by the editorials. One of them told R. Means Davis,29 a travelling correspondent for The News and Courier: "Dawson killed himself and Chamberlain in that long string of editorials. He seemed determined to ram him down our throats, until it actually sickened those of us who at first favored fusion."30

Significantly, in the very edition in which the first of these editorials appeared, there was the initial public mention of Wade

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27 Editorials, News and Courier, July 4, 1876; July 17, 1876, p. 2.
28 D. H. Chamberlain to F. W. Dawson, May 22, 1876, Dawson papers.
29 For his reports, see News and Courier, July 8, 1876; July 11, 1876; July 13, 1876; July 15, 1876; July 17, 1876; July 21, 1876.
30 Davis, "Campaign of 1876." See also Allen, Governor Chamberlain's Administration, p. 331. Allen blames these editorials for widening the breach within Democratic ranks.
Hampton as a Democratic gubernatorial candidate. Three days later Dawson commented, as he would do in later days regarding other prospective candidates, that Hampton would be a fine choice although the editor still opposed a Straightout course. 31

At this point then, in the words of a contemporary, despite the growth of the Straightout movement, "the weight of sober and prudent argument and of journalistic gun powder and outside pressure were on the side of the mild and persuasive compromise course--until Hamburg." The events which occurred in the small town of Hamburg on July 8, 1876 had a devastating effect on state politics. They virtually precipitated a political "revolution within ten days." 32

This "Hamburg massacre," in which a total of seven Negro militia men were killed, was most heartily condemned in the editorial columns of The News and Courier. Dawson could see no justification for the "cowardly killing" of the seven. The advantages of culture and intelligence, he argued, required special levels of "self-reverence and self-control" from white men. By this "barbarous" murder, the perpetrators had wronged both themselves and the state. 33 On the following day, Dawson went further, insisting that there was no reason for the brutality involved at Hamburg. Nonetheless, he sorrowed: "We

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31 Editorial, News and Courier, July 5, 1876; July 8, 1876, p. 2.

32 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, p. 34. See also, George Brown Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900 (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1965), pp. 11-12; Davis, "The Campaign of 1876" Simkins and Woody, South Carolina Reconstruction, p. 485; Williamson, "After Slavery," p. 408.

33 Editorial, News and Courier, July 19, 1876, p. 2.
take no pleasure in condemning what was done at Hamburg. We wish that it were such an act as we could conscientiously justify and defend."

Charges levelled at the paper for giving "aid and comfort" to the Radicals by deploiring the action were unavoidable because "...there is only one right and one wrong, for Democrat and Republican." Furthermore, the editor asserted, he was not alone: "...such violence has not the sympathy or the approval of the vast majority of the Democracy of the State."34

Given the emotional climate of the state at that moment, Dawson had, for once, misjudged public opinion. His Charleston rival, the Journal of Commerce, demanded a "fair hearing" for the white citizens involved at Hamburg, while Dawson, "full of impulses"35 and perhaps "anxious to clear the party skirts of bloodshed,"36 was denouncing the affair. A reporter for the rival later described the results as follows: "...the Journal of Commerce collected its mail in tall wicker baskets—literally by the bushel" and new subscriptions poured in. Meantime, "The News and Courier was deluged with stops. Paid in advance subscribers refused to take it from postoffices or returned its copies unopened, with derisive and insulting messages and letters."37

Even if only partially true, such actions alerted Dawson to the threat.

34 Editorial, News and Courier, July 11, 1876, p. 2.

35 Davis, "Campaign of 1876."

36 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, pp. 34-35. This opinion is backed by an editorial, News and Courier, July 13, 1876, p. 2.

37 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, pp. 34-35.
On July 12 two events hastened the downfall of the cooperationist movement. W. J. Whipper was declared qualified to sit on the Charleston bench by Chief Justice Moses, and the executive committee of the Democratic Party called its convention to nominate state officers for August 15, a date well in advance of the Republican convention. Whipper's "challenge to decency" brought thousands to the Straightout cause, remembered a contemporary, adding: "Captain Dawson continued his struggle for what he believed to be, and what looked to be, the safe and hopeful policy, but he saw and felt that the people had gone far beyond his influence." 

With an audible gnashing of his editorial teeth, Dawson protested that the executive committee had acted "unwisely" in calling the convention so early, but he accepted this decision with as good a grace as possible. Ever practical, he soon issued an appeal for peace and unity within the party, for in a while "the rural lion will roar in unison with the bleating of the urban lamb." Almost surrendering, he added:

We sought, and seek, to induce our young braves and old chiefs to follow to the enemies' village the broad trail that we have marked out; but there cannot be two attacking parties, our force is not strong enough for that, and if the Democratic braves will not go our way we shall go theirs.

38 News and Courier, July 13, 1876, p. 1.
39 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, p. 43.
40 Editorial, News and Courier, July 14, 1876, p. 2.
41 Editorial, News and Courier, July 19, 1876, p. 2.
Nonetheless, Dawson was not yet completely ready to surrender. Continuing to defend his Hamburg stance, he reprinted articles from other state journals which espoused cooperation in prominent page-one positions. He countered the Straightout claim that fidelity to Democratic principle required a Democratic gubernatorial nominee by contending "...we consider the welfare of South Carolina of more importance than the success of the Democratic party." Only a "noisy few" were behind the Straightout movement, he claimed somewhat desperately. "They march their forces across the stage and behind the scenes, and across the stage again, until a handful of men wears the imposing appearance of an army." Repeatedly, there appeared an "almost prayerful plea for delay" in holding the convention.

However, Dawson was too realistic to burn all his bridges.

Under the headline "A Glorious Example," R. Means Davis, the roving correspondent, reported sentiment in Laurens as being overwhelmingly

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42 Editorials, News and Courier, July 22, 1876; July 28, 1876, p. 2.
43 News and Courier, July 24, 1876; July 31, 1876, p. 1.
44 Editorials, News and Courier, July 25, 1876; July 26, 1876, p. 2.
45 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, p. 43.
46 Editorials, News and Courier, July 31, 1876; August 1, 1876; August 2, 1876; August 7, 1876; August 10, 1876, p. 2.
Straightout. On the editorial page of the next day's issue, Dawson, while still supporting Chamberlain, admitted that perhaps Hamburg had left no alternative to a straight Democratic ticket. 47

As the convention approached, however, Dawson mounted a last offensive. Rather threateningly, he pointed out that Northern capital flowed to the agricultural sector of the state through Charleston. Thus, Charleston bore a heavy responsibility to urge that "politics be treated as a matter of business, not sentiment, and that extreme policies and measures be rejected" in order to maintain the confidence of investors and to escape the danger of a shut-off of investment capital. Should that occur, the city might become "wholly unable to shoulder, and carry, the agricultural interests during such seasons as the present." 48 Charleston's leading merchant prince, George W. Williams, declined consideration as a Democratic nominee, declaring: "In my judgment the Democratic party ought not to make a nomination for Governor. We are not in a condition to enter into an excited political contest." He pledged his support to Chamberlain and, Dawson noted, almost all of Charleston's bankers and merchants agreed. 49

But, Dawson and the Charleston community were swept up; they could not stem the tide of emotion and optimism initiated months

47 *News and Courier*, July 27, 1876; p. 1; editorial, July 28, 1876, p. 2.


earlier and regenerated by the Hamburg affair. Despite all his efforts, Dawson "might as well have tried to stop a prairie fire by squirting on it a little bottle of ink." 50

Wade Hampton announced on August 10 that he would "cheerfully obey" a draft even though it involved the "highest sacrifice." Dawson promised to rally behind his candidacy if he were chosen but still could see no possibility of his election. 51

On August 14, the day before the convention opened, the bridge-mending was openly declared. Commenting on the testimony given in the Hamburg matter, Dawson affirmed:

...we feel that the first accounts...as published by the Augusta papers, and ourselves, were unjust to the white citizens of Aiken and Edgefield, in failing to show the measure of provocation given them by the armed negroes.

Probably, the fast-retreating editor wrote, it was an "inexorable necessity" to disarm the Negro militia troop. In another editorial, accepting the inevitable, he expressed the hope that the convention would choose the candidates who were most likely to "repel no moderate voter and who will bring out the full strength of the party."

All must support the decision "whether we like it or not." 52

General James Conner made one final attempt to convince the Democratic gathering in Columbia of the efficacy of cooperation as

50 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, p. 42.
51 Editorial, News and Courier, August 10, 1876, p. 2.
52 Editorials, News and Courier, August 14, 1876, p. 2.
a "certain and lasting" program. His effort was doomed, as the test for permanent chairman soon indicated. W. W. Harllee, a Straightout advocate, defeated C. H. Simonton of Charleston by a vote of 78 to 65. On August 16, the decision was made. Hampton was chosen to carry the Democratic standard, and, in a supreme effort for unity, such cooperationists as Conner and E. W. Moise of Sumter were also put on the ticket. The newly chosen executive committee was composed of such formerly divergent opinion as that represented by A. C. Haskell and J. Adger Smyth of Charleston.

Dawson's editorial was a classic. Under the headline "Hampton and Victory," he pledged to do his part to defeat the Radicals, "one and all.... The task is one of stupendous difficulty, but it is not impossible of achievement." Unity, organization, and a "lavish use of means" could insure success in November. In eloquent prose, he pleaded: "Let discord be buried as when Sumter was aflame and the whole State sprang to arms! Let us bear and forbear, work and pray, and devote ourselves to the cause with all the fire and impetuosity of the Southern nature...." Then would November bring the "grandest victory ever won in South Carolina."

53 Richardson Miles to W. P. Miles, August 24, 1876, quoted in Williamson, After Slavery, p. 408.

54 News and Courier, August 16, 1876, p. 1.

55 News and Courier, August 17, 1876, p. 1; Simkins and Woody, South Carolina Reconstruction, p. 491.

56 Editorial, News and Courier, August 17, 1876, p. 2.
Dawson fulfilled his pledges as did the Charleston business community. Commented an observer, "The wholeheartedness with which General Connor, Charleston, and The News and Courier threw themselves into the campaign cleared the way for success, made it possible..." When Hampton made a campaign appearance in Charleston on October 30, Dawson, along with many business leaders, rode in the carriage procession headed by the candidate. George W. Williams had all of his employees, white and Negro, lining the streets cheering Hampton, dressed in red shirts, symbols of the 1876 campaign. Several months later, when Hampton called upon President Hayes, he was accompanied by Dawson and ten Charleston capitalists.58

Thus did the political flirtation between Dawson and Chamberlain come, however unwillingly, to an end. Although there is no reason to believe that their personal friendship and mutual respect ceased, their working alliance was over. It was halted by the same motive which engendered it—the pragmatism of the Charleston editor. Words which have been used to describe a European contemporary apply equally to Dawson:

He lived by doing, which meant advance and retreat, adaptation, give and take. A formal dogma that might have closed off some avenue of action was not possible

57 Ball, State That Forgot, p. 178
58 Williams, Hampton and His Red Shirts, pp. 340-341; 443.
for him. He was always the bridge, between men as between ideas. He was a working idealist.59

Dawson accepted Chamberlain because he felt that the Governor was the best means toward the peaceful reforms which Charleston and South Carolina demanded. He did not reject Chamberlain but in the end and after a long struggle, bowed to overwhelming pressures.

Their relationship and, more importantly, the coalition that it represented, helped first to shape the course of political action within the state during Governor Chamberlain's term of office. They finally, in combination with other factors, did much to bring about the complete disintegration of the state Republican Party and the return of power to the Democrats. More than three-quarters of a century of membership by South Carolina in the "Solid Democratic South" has followed the collapse of the Dawson-Chamberlain flirtation.

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General

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Francis W. Dawson, pragmatic editor of the influential Charleston News and Courier, and Daniel H. Chamberlain, last Reconstruction governor of South Carolina, developed a close working relationship during the years 1874 through 1876.

The two Southern emigres had opposing political affiliations. Dawson, a Democrat, bitterly fought both the nomination and election of Republican Chamberlain in 1874. The editor's evaluation of the Republican voting strength in the state nonetheless led him to support a bolting group of Independent Republicans in the 1874 campaign. However, Chamberlain's attempts to secure orderly, peaceful reform soon won the praise and ultimately the complete support of Dawson and the powerful Charleston business community.

The remarkable alliance grew and took sustenance from cooperation and compromise. Predictably, both Republican and Democratic partisans sought to topple the two leaders of the cooperation movement. As the election of 1876 approached, Republican malcontents, fired by dissatisfaction with the Governor's reform and economy measures, attempted to discredit Chamberlain. Democratic dissidents denounced Dawson's strategy and called for a "Straightout" Democratic effort in the upcoming elections. Their cause drew strength from the unhappy economic situation and from the recent example of Mississippi's "redemption."

In July, 1876, the emotional rebellion against Dawson's program of cooperation climaxed at the village of Hamburg when several Negro militia men were murdered. Despite the editor's ardent championship of Chamberlain and his fervent pleas for the preservation of the alliance, Dawson's plans were swept away.

The Democrats, staunchly supported by the realistic editor, went on to a "Straightout" victory with Wade Hampton. The end of the flirtation marked the beginning of South Carolina's membership in the "Solid South" of the Democracy.