

The late Gaillard Hunt, in his life of Calhoun, says that Calhoun addressed the secretary of state "because that officer receives the returns of the votes of electors for president and vice-president and transmits them to the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House" (p. 159). Mr. Hunt here fell into a partial error. The Constitution stipulates that the votes of the electors shall be "directed to the president of the Senate." The law of March 1, 1792, relative to the election of president and vice-president, provides that "in case there shall be no president of the Senate at the seat of government on the arrival of the persons entrusted with the lists of the votes of the electors, then such persons shall deliver the lists of votes in their custody into the office of the secretary of state, to be safely kept and delivered over, as soon as may be, to the president of the Senate."

It would be the exception, therefore, rather than the rule for the secretary of state to receive the returns of the electoral votes. Not only that, but Section 11 of this same act of March 1, 1792, specifically enacts, "That the only evidence of a refusal to accept, or of a resignation of the office of president or vice-president, shall be an instrument in writing declaring the same, and subscribed by the person refusing to accept or resigning, as the case may be, and delivered into the office of the secretary of state" (Revised Statutes, Sec. 151). Calhoun undoubtedly was aware of this provision and acted accordingly. No other official action with respect to his resignation appears to have been taken. The Senate had met on December 3, 1832, and, in Calhoun's absence, had elected Hugh L. White of Tennessee president *pro tempore*. When Calhoun presented his credentials as senator he was sworn in in the usual manner.

Since this section of the act of March 1, 1792, has never been repealed, it is to be presumed that any president or vice-president could resign in the manner there provided. To date, Calhoun is the only one who has done so.

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County Consolidation in Tennessee. In an attempt to reduce the cost of government in Tennessee, Mr. T. R. Preston, chairman of the state tax commission recently appointed by the governor, and Mr. A. L. Childress, state tax superintendent, have suggested a reduction in the number of counties. This idea was probably prompted by the startling fact that county government in Tennessee costs nineteen times the amount spent for state government. Governor A. E. Smith,

of New York, it will be recalled, recently suggested a similar reduction in the number of New York counties, with the same idea of economy in mind.

There are two methods by which the desired reduction in the number of counties, and thus the cost of government, can be realized: first, the natural absorption of a small county, or of several small counties, by a large county, and second, the more artificial method of consolidation of all counties into a smaller number of units by legislation or constitutional amendment. Both plans either are being worked out or have been suggested for Tennessee. It is altogether logical that such a movement should start in Tennessee. This state has inherited the English county in as pure form as any commonwealth which can trace its institutional origins directly or indirectly to the mother country, yet the state's administration today is a notable example of what can be done in state administrative reorganization.

In 1919 two counties consolidated; in 1927 the county courts of two counties agreed to a consolidation, and a measure requesting permission to consolidate will be presented to the next legislature; and two state officers have presented a plan for redistricting the state, reducing the number of counties from ninety-five to less than fifty. To some observers these are startling facts. At all events, they show that some attempt is being made to explore the "dark continent of American politics."

In 1919 Hamilton county, with Chattanooga as the county seat, absorbed James county, the legislature granting its permission upon the request of the latter and the acquiescence of the former. This absorption of a small county by a larger county has proved successful. The tax-rate in James county has been cut in half, and at the same time improved roads have increased from less than five to over forty-five miles, and schools are now in session eight and nine months as compared with four months during the year before the consolidation. In general, the county is in a much better condition than ever before.

Because of this successful experiment, Meigs county, which borders Hamilton on the north, held a joint court meeting with Hamilton last year, and it was agreed that the two counties should sponsor a bill in the next legislature to allow Hamilton county to absorb Meigs. The tax rate in Meigs county now is \$4.00, while in Hamilton it is \$1.40.

With the same idea of tax reduction in mind, Mr. A. P. Childress, in answer to a request for suggestions as to the means of reducing taxes from Mr. Preston, chairman of the state tax commission, president of the Hamilton National Bank of Chattanooga, and president of the American Bankers' Association, proposed that the ninety-five counties of the state be consolidated into eleven units, comprising on an average eight or nine counties, and each with an area of some 3,790 square miles and a population of about 211,884. These new counties should be grouped around an important town, the highway and railroad center of each district. In order to overcome the sentimental objection to changing county names, Mr. Childress, suggested that the eleven new units be named as follows: George Washington county, John Sevier county, Robert E. Lee county, Andrew Johnson county, Benjamin Franklin county, Andrew Jackson county, James K. Polk county, Sam Houston county, Davy Crockett county, James Madison county, and Bedford Forrest county.

Under the present arrangement of counties, each of the ninety-five units supports, on an average, twenty principal officers, costing the average county some \$200,000. For the total number of counties this means 1,900 chief officers and an annual expenditure for this item alone of \$19,000,000. Assuming that a similar plan of internal organization would be followed in the new units, the total cost would not greatly exceed \$2,200,000.

Of course many objections to the plan will be raised, for it is no small undertaking to reduce the number of counties from ninety-five to eleven. Therefore, as a matter of expediency, Mr. Preston has suggested that the number be reduced to about fifty, and that the method be that of absorption, as has been employed in the case of Hamilton and James counties. Certainly a beginning of reform could be made by grouping several counties about the four chief cities of the state, i.e., Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga; and the process has actually begun in the Chattanooga district.

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