



## The Nullification Crisis

Jackson's spoils system and the removal of the Indians were both popular policies. His third move, however, did not please his supporters in the South.

In 1828 Congress raised tariff rates to a new high. This was done to protect the industries of the Northeast.

Vice-President John C. Calhoun led a strong attack on the tariff law. He based his opinions on the theory of states' rights, the idea that some powers were reserved for the states. Calhoun carried the idea of states' rights to a new extreme.

According to Calhoun, the Constitution was an agreement among the states. Therefore, the states, rather than the Supreme Court, should have the power to decide what the Constitution means. If a state thought that a federal law violated the Constitution, it should be able to nullify (kill) the law. The protective tariff, Calhoun said, should be nullified because it helped one section of the country at the expense of the others.

Daniel Webster, a noted Senator from Massachusetts, made a stirring reply to Calhoun's arguments. Webster said that the federal union had been created by the people, not by the states. If every state was free to disobey federal laws, the United States would return to the unhappy conditions existing under the Articles of Confederation. This would mean disagreements among the states, civil wars, and finally the breakup of the Union.

Calhoun expected Jackson, who was known as a "states' rights man," to back up his southern supporters. To Calhoun's disappointment, Jackson did not support him. Calhoun resigned as Vice-President. South Carolina then elected him to the Senate, where he led the states' rights movement for the next twenty years.

Congress reduced the tariff rates in 1832, but South Carolina was still not satisfied. Its governor called a special convention, which voted to nullify the new tariff act. The convention declared that South Carolina would leave the Union if the federal government tried to collect tariffs within its borders. The governor called for volunteers to fight against any "federal invasion."

Jackson quickly met this challenge. "The laws of the United States must be executed," he warned the people of South Carolina. He asked Congress to give him the right to use the army and navy, if necessary, to enforce federal laws in South Carolina. Privately, he told some members of Congress that he planned to send 50,000 troops into South Carolina. "If one drop of blood be shed their in defiance of the laws of the United States," he said, "I will hang the first man of them I can get my hands on to the first tree I can find."

The threat of civil war soon ended, however, because Henry Clay of Kentucky worked out a compromise settlement. Congress passed a new tariff law, which provided for a gradual lowering of tariff rates to the level of 1816.

President Jackson accepted the compromise, but he did not like it. He had wanted to end the battle over nullification by forcing South Carolina to back down. He saw that the state was encouraged by its success. He predicted that South Carolina would use the threat to secede from the Union again in the years ahead.

1. What did Congress do in 1828 that did NOT please the South?
2. Vice President John C. Calhoun led a strong attack on the tariff law by using the theory of states' rights. In your own words, explain Calhoun's argument in support of nullification of the protective tariff.
3. Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster made a strong argument against states' rights and nullification. Explain Webster's argument in your own words.
4. How did this controversy lead to Calhoun's resignation as vice President?
5. How did South Carolina react when Congress reduced the tariff rates in 1832?
6. What was Andrew Jackson's reaction to South Carolina's threat to secede?
7. The threat of civil war ended because Henry Clay of Kentucky worked out a compromise settlement. What was this settlement?
8. Why was President Jackson dissatisfied with the compromise?

# **PROJECT: NULLIFICATION PROPAGANDA**

Now that you have participated in the debate over the Nullification Crisis, it is time to express your views through the creation of a propaganda project.

**Directions:** Each group will take on a position on the tariff (North/West or South). Based on the debates in support or opposition to South Carolina's Ordinance of Nullification, each group will create an article of propaganda that reflects the views of your group.

Each project will contain the following:

- **An article of propaganda--iMovie, iTrailer, poster, etc.**
- **A catchy slogan that connects to your views regarding nullification**
- **A picture or symbol that corresponds to your slogan**
- **A brief written explanation of the article of propaganda**

(A-3)

## **The Tariff Issue from the NORTHERN Perspective**

1. We need an American Policy that will support our UNITED States of America. If we are depending on foreign countries we are not following an American Policy, instead we are ruining our very own country's economy.
2. Let us stimulate our industry and protect our factories. We cannot support foreign trade. Instead we need to discourage the purchase of foreign goods. This can be done by imposing a tariff on foreign goods.
3. Even if the American goods are more expensive, it is better in the long run to buy the goods from the American workers. Their employment means they will be getting paid to make purchases of more American products.
4. The federal government must care for its American workers. They will do this by protecting against the dependence on foreign goods by placing a tariff. After all, the tariff is nothing more than a tax on the produce of foreign industry, with a view toward promoting American industry.

The Tariff Issue from the **WESTERN** perspective:

1. The opposition to the tariff comes from the cotton and tobacco planters from the South. They are afraid that Britain will not buy their cotton and tobacco if Congress imposes a high tariff.
2. BUT trade without a protective tariff has resulted in MISERY, BANKRUPTCY, and RUIN. Because we do not protect our US industry, the farm prices have to be lower to sell, factories are not making any profit, and commerce is very slow. These are all results of not protecting our national industry.
3. Instead of looking out for our country's economy and buying domestic goods, we look to Europe to supply our needs. We buy from abroad everything we eat, drink and wear!
4. We need the factories of the Northern or New England states to succeed. If they are successful, the west will not succeed because these factory towns will consume the wheat, corn and hogs from our western farmers.

(A-5)

The Tariff Issue from the **SOUTHERN** perspective

1. This is a very serious time for the cotton trade. Foreign cotton is serving as major competition to our domestic cotton.
2. If we stop buying manufactured goods from Britain, we will lose them as an important cotton customer. It is British policy to buy cotton from the country that buys the most manufactured goods from them.
3. The protective tariff that restricts the sale of British manufactured goods in the United States will result in ending trade between the British and the United States. This will destroy our cotton economy!
4. This law restricting the commerce of the south is obviously created to favor the interests of the northern factory system only. The high tariff on the foreign goods will force us to buy manufactured goods from the northern states and not the cheaper one from Britain.